

The New _____ **INTERNATIONAL**

OCTOBER • 1946

MAX SHACHTMAN ON:

TROTSKY'S "STALIN"

A Critical Evaluation

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KOESTLER

An Exchange Between Irving Howe and Neil Weiss

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James T. Farrell:

AMERICAN LITERATURE MARCHES ON - II

•

Leon Trotsky:

THE TIMETABLE FOR REVOLUTION

•

Albert Goldman:

THE DEFENSE OF STALINIST RUSSIA

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THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

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Business Manager's

MEMO TO OUR READERS

In last month's issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, we announced our intention to begin serious efforts for the revival of the magazine—its subscription lists and its general circulation. Our announced program was along four definite and distinct lines:

- (a) Regular, systematic appearance of the magazine.
- (b) The beginning of a subscription campaign to expand our list of regular readers.
- (c) Arousing of the bundle order agents of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL to increase their sales at bookstores, newsstands, etc.
- (d) Efforts in the direction of expanding the pre-war foreign circulation of the magazine.

Now we want to report on the preliminary, but by no means complete, results of our first efforts. However, we want it clearly understood that this is only a beginning effort. Not only have we a long way to go, but we also want it understood that we really have yet to get underway.

(1) The last two issues of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL have appeared on time, to the dot. They have been in the hands of readers and bundle order agents either the last week of the preceding month of publication, or the first week of the month of publication. In most instances, the former. This is a good start toward our systematic appearance.

It is our hope and object to see to it that next year, 1947, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL will become once more a monthly magazine, with 12 issues each year. This is not yet guaranteed. It depends exclusively on the good results of our campaign to put life back into the magazine's circulation and finances. We hope to be able to announce this news in the future, but meantime, the frequency of our publication has not changed. There will be ten (10) issues published this year, 1946.

(2) We take this opportunity to announce that beginning next month—November, 1946—there will be a subscription campaign to build up THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. The next issue will contain full details on this—our offer to subscribers, our quotas to agents, etc. This will be a big step in our campaign in behalf of the magazine.

(3) Some, but not enough, of our bundle order agents have begun to respond. Miriam Evans of Detroit is conducting a drive for more newsstands to display THE NEW INTERNATIONAL; Ken Hillyer of Chicago is working hard on getting some subscriptions. We wish that our agents would follow up along these lines. In the next press manager's column, we shall publish reports on the various activities of these agents. *Only a start has been made.*

(4) Foreign circulation, in the form of subscriptions, has been reviving nicely—with subs coming in from India, France, England, Australia, etc. But renewal of contact with bundle order agents is more difficult and there is no particular progress to report on this front. Efforts will continue.

And there's the story as of now. Plenty of room for improvement, but a fairly good start. We will continue our progress reports toward the rebuilding of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL in future issues.

Press Manager,

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

VOLUME XII

OCTOBER, 1946

NUMBER 8

NOTES OF THE MONTH

WAGE-PRICE SPIRAL AND THE MOOD OF THE WORKERS

Last month saw the round of post-war strikes that have successively tied up steel, auto, telephone, telegraph, electrical goods, packing houses, railroads and mines hit the maritime industry in the greatest strike of its history. The solidarity of AFL and CIO seamen against the government's Wage Stabilization Board—a solidarity maintained despite the petty, narrow maneuvers of the leaders—brought a victory in the form of the complete capitulation of the government to the wage demands of the unions.

However, the maritime strike, together with such important local strikes as that of the New York truck drivers, was the last belated action in the labor offensive unleashed by the auto workers nearly a year ago, rather than the herald of a new strike wave. If anything it indicated that the *first* round of post-war strikes was drawing to a close. Indicative of this was the fact that AFL unions were now prominently identified with strikes and strike threats. Of symptomatic importance in this respect was the strike of eight hundred white-collar employees in the Gary steel mills. The strike wave is now reaching back into the ranks of the less progressive unions and among the unorganized.

On the industrial front as a whole, however, comparative quiet reigned—July and August saw fewer man hours lost due to strikes than any two months since the war ended. There was great discontent in the auto plants, the steel mills, the coal mines, the packing houses and other basic industries that had undergone strikes to secure wage increases from thirteen cents to twenty cents an hour. However, the discontent did not crystallize into strike talk. If anything a widespread apathy toward the trade unions was evident in many of the great industrial centers, including such hot-beds as Detroit. Attendance at union meetings lagged and rank-and-file interest in the union committees on the job fell off. Workers in industries like the key auto industry were plainly going through a post-strike lull.

The apathy was occasioned by the sense of dismay and frustration that has seeped into the workers' consciousness as a result of the gradual realization that the wage gains of the strikes have been wiped out by rising prices. General Motors strikers, the spearhead of the whole strike wave, look back upon their bitter three-month hold-out which concluded with an inadequate eighteen-and-a-half cent raise. They show no eagerness to repeat *that* experience.

The prevalent sentiment expresses itself in remarks that "we can lick the corporation but we can't lick the grocer and butcher." The "grocer and butcher," does not, of course, refer to the retailer down the street but to the whole price-gouging

economy. (Among the "grocers and butchers" is the Ford Motor Company which has just been granted its third price increase by the OPA, though its 1947 model has yet to appear for sale.)

This sense of futility about strikes has been seized upon by the top leadership of the CIO as a pretext to preach, in the words of Philip Murray, "the need for a new no-strike pledge." This is the same Murray who settled the steel strike on the basis of a five dollar increase per ton of steel. Such a pledge is the only solution which the baffled conservative leadership can think of. It constitutes a complete surrender to the wage theory of the National Manufacturers Association—*increase production first, and wage increases will follow.*

However, the failure of the workers to strike, whether through the spread of defeatism and apathy or through the active policy of a "no-strike pledge," will not diminish the present gap between wages and prices nor even stop the gap from increasing. The months of July and August saw the swiftest price advances in any two-month period since 1940. Given this trend for the next three or four months the squeeze upon the standard of living of the workers will force them into some kind of action. *A second round of strikes beginning next winter or spring is unavoidable.*

It is extremely unlikely, however, that the next wave of strikes will merely repeat the cycle. The hard lessons of experience have drilled into the minds of the workers the significance of a fatal link between wages and prices. The present reluctance to strike for a mere wage raise is evidence of this. It is, therefore, inevitable that the need to strike will immediately bring to the fore the question, "But what about prices?" We can predict with certainty that prices will sit at the negotiating table alongside of wages. The essence of the GM strike program, "Wage increases without price rises," will in one form or another constitute the basis of the workers' demands in the strikes. Once prices are brought into the collective bargaining session along with wages, the question of profits becomes inevitable. Profits in turn resurrects the old argument of General Motors about "ability to pay" and the unions must in response raise the demand to "open the books."

The GM program is, therefore, revealed as the only way out of the price-wage spiral for labor. It is the answer which is indicated by the factors inherent in the objective situation, rather than a "clever scheme" invented by Walter Reuther on the basis of his socialist background as some naive people believed at the time of the GM strike. If Reuther's socialist background is involved, it is only to the extent that his grasp of economics and his foresight is greater than that of the run-of-the-mill union leaders and so permitted him to realize a year ago what they are only beginning to understand now: that the old Gompers philosophy of "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work" and "Leave prices and profits to the employer" is deadlier than a dodo.

We conclude, therefore, that a new strike wave is unavoidable. The addition of price-consciousness to the traditional wage-consciousness of American labor will forge a program far in advance of the mere "more money" demands of the past. We confidently look forward to the entire CIO taking up where the GM strikers left off and making as the rallying cry of labor the demand, "Wage increases without price rises."

THE PARIS CONFERENCE— INTERIM OBSERVATIONS

The "Conference of the Twenty-one Victors" moves wearily along its way at Paris. As of now, not a single final document has been initialed by the participants, let alone agreed to. From debate to debate, discussion to counter-discussion, minor crisis to minor crisis, the imperialist world of the Great Powers proves its incapacity and sordidness. The white dove of peace, originally barred from the proceedings, is no longer even mentioned. Through the turns and twists of the agenda runs the thread of potential war between the two great master nations, Russia and America, along with their satellites. The rumors of collapse, indefinite postponement, meetings of the Big Four Foreign Ministers, meetings of the Big Three chiefs were widespread recently—all the result of the bitter disputes that have stymied the Conference.

Will Create Temporary "Peace"

But these rumors are probably grossly exaggerated, by interested parties adept at diplomatic blackmail. A violent break-up of the Conference at this point would draw the knife of war out of its sheath and would, in a sense, disrupt the "natural" processes now unfolding in preparation for World War III and Atomic War I. Not a one of the Great Powers is militarily, economically, psychologically or morally prepared for such a war today. It is therefore far more likely that the Conference will continue, will patch up temporary truces and bargains dealing with the disputed questions (that is, cover up Europe's gaping wounds with first-aid patches), and conclude on some sort of note of "peace." But such treaties or agreements as may finally be yielded by the Conference will be characteristically shaky and tend to collapse at the slightest tension. At best, it can be a temporary "peace," acquiesced in by the Great Powers, the better to carry out their preparatory plans for the ultimate showdown.

The Luxemburg Palace meeting has assumed the aspect of a gigantic public forum at which the Powers debate and present their respective positions. This procedure has been favorably contrasted, by bourgeois journalists, with the secretive proceedings of the Versailles Conference of World War I. Certainly we must express our delight at the public nature of the present Conference, by which the imperialists of all sizes and stripes lay bare their predatory souls and annihilate one another, but we must likewise understand the explanation for this contrast in the two post-war peace conferences. The Bolshevik Revolution and its European consequences forced the imperialists behind closed doors in an unsuccessful effort to conceal their work from the exposing arts of the Russian revolutionists. The present conference, unfortunately, has no such need. Russia, one of the most rapacious and cynical of the participating powers, sits at the table with the selfsame members of Lenin's "Den of Thieves"; the European revolution is quiescent and absent from the scene;

the imperialists prefer the advantage of open debate before public opinion to the lessened risk of exposure of their reactionary schemes; the condemning voice of the revolutionary forces is hushed or stilled.

Struggle Over Germany

Alongside of and parallel to the conference there is another struggle taking place, only this struggle has more practical consequences. It may prove to be more important historically than the conference work. We refer to the Allied struggle with Russia over Germany. *Labor Action* of September 16, 1946, has tersely summarized the issue as, "... a cynical tug of war struggle between Russian imperialism and Anglo-American imperialism." *Yesterday's opponent has become today's most desirable partner for tomorrow's war!* The Molotov speech at the earlier Foreign Minister's conference was the opening step, announcing in effect the collapse of the Potsdam Agreement for mutual milking of the German cow, and the intention of Russia to unify Germany under the GPU. Byrnes' speech in ruined Stuttgart was, to quote *Labor Action*, a proposal for "the partial revival of German capitalism... in order to create anew a point of support for the next war..."

The struggle for Germany is in a more advanced stage, practically speaking, because of the prime importance of that nation of 66 millions lying at the heart of Europe. Here practice must precede the formalities of lengthy debate. Thus the Russians have proceeded with their complex plans to tighten up their régime in Eastern Germany (completion of "nationalization" measures, forcing of elections, etc.), while the Anglo-Americans have responded with the unification of their two zones and various plans to stimulate the revival of economic and industrial life in the unified zones, while beginning to squeeze the French zone to force its joining the Western German alliance. Here we see the central division of the Paris Conference as it affects the destiny of a great human mass—a tragic division that portends yet more tragic consequences. Will Germany become the central slaughterground in the next war? Both camps have already planned it this way.

But the results of these moves, and the Conference itself, can have the opposite effect, provided the revolutionary wing of world labor grasps what is taking place and what is in store. For example, the conflicting policies of the imperialist occupants of Germany can bring about objective results that, properly utilized, can facilitate the revival of the German proletariat and its movement. Resurrection of economic and industrial life, regardless of the motives, is precisely what is needed in Germany for a resurrection of the German revolutionary vanguard. We venture to say that even today every German worker understands his and his country's position, lying between the two great pre-war camps. If again able to stand upon his feet and live, he will be able to take his place in Germany's future national liberation struggle—that is, the fight to remove Germany out of the hands of imperialist Mars and into the safe keeping of the European proletariat.

The same holds true, of course, for the issues at stake in Paris. There, war and its preparations are supreme, and every day underscores the basic alignments. The issues of peace and war, of Europe and its revival, will be safe only when removed from Luxemburg and placed squarely into the hands of the working people of all lands.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL will devote an extensive analysis to the results of the conference following its conclusion.

Trotsky's "Stalin"

A Critical Evaluation

The emergence of Russia as a power of first magnitude is indissociable from the name of Stalin. Now that Mussolini is gone, there is nowhere a government chief that has ruled his country for so long a continuous period as Stalin, or ruled it so completely. His mark upon the destiny of Russia and for that matter of the rest of the world has certainly been deeper than that of any other man alive today. Few other lives in a century rampant with storm and strife have been as stormy as his or have aroused as much controversy.

In the face of this, the paucity of serious biographical literature about Stalin—as compared, let us say, with the available literature on the life and work of Lenin or Hitler or even Roosevelt—is astonishing. The official Russian biographies are valuable only for what they conceal and what they invent. The quasi-official non-Russian biography by Henri Barbusse has only the added value of a commentary on the depths of naive sycophancy to which a free mind can sink. The biography by the reactionary Caucasian Essad Bey is worthless even as cheaply romanticized malice. The biography by Isaac Don Levine, interesting in part, is not illuminating or instructive and seldom rises above the level of glorified Hearstism. Boris Souvarine's study of Stalin is erudite, painstaking, scintillating and worthy of serious attention, but it lacks that profound grasp of the problem constituted by Stalin's life of which the author deprived himself when he abandoned Marxist objectivity. There are, in addition, a few minor pamphlets published abroad by Russian émigrés, which are for the most part worse than useless or which, if useful, deal with isolated parts of Stalin's life; there is a positively putrid booklet by the Englishman Stephen Grahame; there is some Nazi "literature" which belongs in the water closet where it was conceived. That is about all.

This paucity is not so astonishing upon reflection, however. Like all other outstanding personages, Stalin has both a personal history, linked with his character, and a social history; he is at once an individual and a social phenomenon. To treat of the individual "alone" offers virtually no difficulties in the case of a Hitler or a Roosevelt. Their lives are pretty much an open book and what they have to conceal can be laid bare with a good sneeze. As social figures the problem is no more difficult: each in his own way was a child of a social order whose anatomy has long been familiar to modern science. Not so in the case of Stalin. His true personal history is not only obscure in large part, but it has been covered up, nailed down and overlaid with a history manufactured and disseminated on a scale that is utterly unprecedented, stupefying and, for its purpose, effective. His true social history is, if anything, far more baffling, for here we are faced not with a familiar but with a new, unfamiliar, unpredicted, unanalyzed social order, of which Stalin is both the child and the parent.

The biographer thus faces a dual handicap without equal in history. Superficiality, glibness, gullibility, impatience, carelessness, sensationalism, lack of a sympathetic understanding of the movement which nursed Stalin and out of which he rose, personal animus, lack of scientific method, lack of scrupulous objectivity—all or many of these characterize the authors of the biographical attempts made up to now. Hence, even the

best of them only come abreast of the handicap but do not surmount it. No man of our time had the qualifications for coping successfully with the dual obstacle that Trotsky had. We know that he had to drive himself physically, so to speak, to write his study of Stalin,* for the subject is not very attractive. But he was able to bring to the work an archaeological patience and thoroughness in digging past layer upon layer of falsification to reveal the bare bones of truth; a direct personal knowledge of the Bolshevik movement in its rise and decline, of its protagonists big and small, of the country and the conditions in which they lived and worked; a personal objectivity which is all the more striking in a man whom Stalin rightly considered his greatest and most dangerous adversary; and such a unifying and illuminating grasp of the riches of the Marxist method of analysis and synthesis as the philistines of Marxism, let alone the philistines in general, cannot possibly comprehend. (For them Marxism says: only classes exist, there are no individuals; man is made by history but history is not made by man; politics is a passive, automatic reflex of economics; man's actions are determined by the amount of cash in his purse; and more of the pitiful same.) As for Trotsky's universally-acknowledged literary qualifications, they need to be mentioned at all only because they help sustain interest in the narration and analysis of a life—Stalin's whole early period—which would otherwise be unbearably tedious.

Trotsky was not permitted by his subject to complete the work. He was murdered by a Stalinist gangster in the very midst of the biography. Only parts of the book can be considered Trotsky's finished product. To give greater coherence to the work, the translator has interpolated sections of his own, carefully set off between brackets, which, while based in large measure on notes and rough outlines by the author, are nevertheless so written as to conflict (in some places violently) with the thinking and the purpose of the author himself. The reader will do well to be on guard against this.†

Bearing all this in mind, the net result is an outstanding and durable triumph over the difficulties whose nature and dimensions we have indicated. It is a first-rate success. If, in our view, a qualification must be added to this, it is for reasons we shall venture to set forth as we go along.

Conditions of Czarism and the Revolutionary Party

Russian Czarism left its serious opponents no parliamentary alternative to the organization of a conspiratorial revolutionary movement. The historical peculiarities of Russia's backwardness left consistent democracy no alternative to the struggle for proletarian power and socialism. Bolshevism—with all that was singular about it as well as all that identified it with the international Marxian movement—can be understood only against the background of these two circumstances.

**Stalin, An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*, by Leon Trotsky. 421 pp. with appendix, glossary and index. Illustrated. Translated by Charles Malamuth. Harper & Bros., New York, \$5.00.

†Between brackets, to be sure, and on his own responsibility, the translator permits himself such phrases as "the vaunted democracy of the Soviets" and "centralization, that sure precursor of totalitarianism" and "the 'rule or ruin' attitude of the Bolsheviks," to cite a few. Trotsky never used and never could use such phraseology, with all it implies, and would never have authorized their use by his translator, even as bracketed-off interpolations. They are an offense both to the author and the readers, and mar a felicitous translation.

To overturn Czarism and lay the democratic foundations for socialism, argued Lenin, to overturn this centralized, autocratic monster which sprawled over vast and variegated lands and peoples, over such economic, political and cultural backwardness, which combined the refinements of contemporary imperialism with semi-feudal anachronisms—required a trained fighting force having at its command all the science and skill of modern class warfare. Lenin's appeal was answered by the most advanced workers of the country, and also by brilliant intellectual forces of the kind which, a century or two earlier, had made up the vanguard of the revolutionary bourgeois democracy of the Western countries. In the Bolshevik Party Lenin fused these two elements by unremitting efforts to raise the workers to the theoretical level of the intellectuals who, by mastering Marxism, placed themselves at its service, in order that they could unitedly raise the entire people to the level of a thoroughgoing revolutionary struggle against Czarism. In one of the first of his writings that revealed him as standing high above all his socialist contemporaries (*What Is to Be Done*), Lenin inveighed against the prevailing looseness, dilettantism and amateurishness of the Russian social-democratic movement and developed (far more broadly, profoundly, consciously and systematically than anyone before him) the concept of the "professional revolutionist."

Among the young students who joined the Social Democracy was Stalin (in Georgia, at the age of 18). In 1904, a year after the split of the party into the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, and after some five years of revolutionary underground activity behind him, Stalin associated himself with the Bolsheviks. He became one of Lenin's professional revolutionists, always at the disposal of the party, working illegally from one town to another to spread revolutionary ideas, to build up units of the party among the workers, to edit party periodicals and popular literature, to organize unions and strikes and demonstrations—even "expropriations" of Czarist funds with which to finance the underground activity—and to serve more than the usual number of years in Czarist prison and exile for his work.

For all that, we do not recognize the young Stalin in the Stalin of today; there does not even seem to be a strong resemblance. Trotsky demonstrates with meticulous attention to detail and overwhelming conclusiveness the facts that have been no secret for a long time:

Stalin was not particularly distinguished in that large group of intellectuals and workers turned Bolshevik professional revolutionists, with respect to grasp of theory, outstanding political ability and independence, or even success in organization—hundreds equalled him at his best and scores were his superior. Stalin was not always an unwavering Bolshevik, if by that is meant a consistent supporter of Lenin's views. Stalin, when he took a position "independent" of Lenin, only disclosed his own provincialism, theoretical backwardness and political mediocrity. Stalin, even after years of direct contact with Lenin and the party leadership, never contributed a positive original idea, never fully grasped the theories and spirit of Bolshevism, was indeed organically alien to them. Stalin was never really a leader of masses, feared and shunned them in fact, and felt most at home in "committee meetings," in intrigue, in cunning combinations and mean maneuvers. Stalin was always devoid of idealism, nobility and a socialist passion for freedom, but he is characterized by rudeness, trickiness, brutality, lack of principle, vindictiveness and similar dark traits. More than that: the last year or more of the life of Lenin, founder of Bolshevism, the most authoritative and pop-

ular voice in the party as a whole, in the party leadership and the country as a whole, was devoted to increasingly stiff blows at Stalin, culminating in the rupture of all personal relations between them and in Lenin's recommendation that Stalin be removed from his most prominent position, general-secretaryship of the ruling party.

An Anatomy of Stalin

Near the high point of Stalin's power, Trotsky insisted that he was only the "outstanding mediocrity" in the party, and this opinion is reiterated in the biography. But to this must be added facts such as these: the comparatively young Stalin was coöpted, under Czarism, to Lenin's Central Committee; remained a member of that Committee throughout Lenin's lifetime; was entrusted by Lenin and the leadership with highly responsible tasks; was linked with Trotsky by Lenin in his testament as one of the "two most able leaders in the present Central Committee"; was nevertheless crushingly assailed by Lenin at the same time in the proposal that he be removed from his post for rudeness, disloyalty and inclination to abuse power; was opposed and combatted at one time or another by virtually every well-known leader of the Bolshevik Party, yet emerged victor over them and in possession of such power and authority as probably no single individual has ever enjoyed in all history.

We seem to be in the realm of irresolvable contradictions. Trotsky did not set himself the mere pedantic task of tabulating the record of a man. Among the aims of the biography is the resolution, by analysis and explanation, of the contradictions, real and apparent.

Against a backdrop of the times—the country, the people, their social relations—Trotsky depicts for us, trait by trait, the personal character of Stalin. More truly, he patiently scrapes away and washes off the encrustation of false strokes and false colors with which Stalin's court painters have concealed his original portrait. That so much time and space should be devoted by a Marxist to personal characteristics in the writing of a political history (Trotsky's biography is nothing but a *political history*) must appear strange and out of place to those whose "concepts" about Marxism are vastly greater than their knowledge of it. Yet Trotsky is *entirely* in the Marxian tradition and a master-hand with the Marxian method. It was the old teacher Marx himself who once wrote in a letter to his friend Kugelmann that world history would indeed be of a "very mystical nature if 'accidents' played no rôle in it. . . . But the acceleration or slowing-down [of the general course of development] are very much dependent upon such 'accidents,' among which also figures the 'accident' of the character of those people who at first stand at the head of the movement."

In restoring the portrait, Trotsky gives us the anatomy of its character. If we abstract each of its features and classify them (rather arbitrarily, as we will see) into "the good" and "the bad" we find, under one heading, firmness, courage, perseverance, will-power, and under the other, rudeness, low cunning, vengefulness, theoretical and political mediocrity, narrowness of horizon and lack of intellectual profundity or breadth, and so forth. The trouble is precisely the fact that these features of character simply cannot be abstracted. In fact, once they are "abstracted," that is the end of all sense in the study of Stalin.

Lenin valued Stalin for his characteristics—for most of them, at any rate—and was able to utilize them in the interests of the movement. And in this he was right. To appreciate this judgment, it is necessary to understand something about the

class struggle in general and about working-class politics, and it is of course necessary to live in this world and not in an imaginary one. Before Lenin got to know Stalin personally—in 1913, during Stalin's first really important trip abroad in Cracow and Vienna where he came into intimate contact with the Bolshevik leader—he knew about him from reports, correspondence or through the opinions of other party men. Even if the views which Stalin ventured now and then to express in opposition to Lenin's had impinged on the latter's consciousness, they could not possibly have made a very deep impression. Lenin undoubtedly made allowances for that. He held no malice toward comrades who differed with him (after all, comrades much more prominent than Stalin and much closer to Lenin differed with him on countless questions of theory and policy without losing his esteem), and then Stalin was still a pretty young comrade and only of local importance in the organization. Yet Lenin, before really knowing him, successfully proposed his coöptation into the Bolshevik Central Committee, in 1912, only a month after the candidacy had been rejected at the party conference in Prague. How could this happen?

The Reaction After 1905

The revolution of 1905 was followed by a deep and widespread reaction. It was not long after its defeat that the whole social-democratic movement, the Bolshevik faction included, began to disintegrate. Those around Lenin who remained steadfast felt the vise of isolation tightening around them year after year, with no let-up until the resurgence began seven years later, in 1912. It should not be too hard for our own generation, which has also seen the consequences of defeats in the form of desertions, disorientation, skepticism, to understand what the movement must have gone through in Russia between 1906 and 1912. It does not, alas, sound altogether unfamiliar when we read Trotsky's description of the times:

Desertion assumed a mass character. Intellectuals abandoned politics for science, art, religion, and erotic mysticism. The finishing touch on this picture was the epidemic of suicides. The transvaluation of values was first of all directed against the revolutionary parties and their leaders. . . .

News dispatches from local organizations to the party's central organ, which was again transferred abroad, were no less eloquent in recording the revolution's disintegration. Even in the hard-labor prisons, the heroes and heroines of uprisings and of terrorist acts turned their backs in enmity upon their own yesterdays and used such words as "party," "comrade," "socialism" in no other than the ironic sense.

Desertions took place not only among the intellectuals, not only among those who were here today and gone tomorrow and to whom the movement was but a half-way house, but even among the advanced workers, who had been part and parcel of the party for years.

... In 1909 Russia still had five or six active organizations; but even they soon sank into desuetude. Membership in the Moscow district organization, which was as high as 500 toward the end of 1908, dropped to 250 in the middle of the following year and half a year later to 150; in 1910 the organization ceased to exist.

Bolshevik leaders were no absolute exception to the trend. Some turned Menshevik; some turned "God-Seekers"; more than a few dropped out of the movement altogether, and if even the official biographies of many of those who became prominent again after the Bolshevik revolution say nothing about their activities from 1906 to 1912 (and sometimes to 1914 and even to 1916), it is because there were no activities to record.

In such times, Stalin's characteristics were of positive value

—especially if the reader maintains simple historical balance and remembers that the Stalin of 1946 is not the Stalin of 35-40 years ago. Stalin was one of the not-too-many who did not flinch and did not quit. His tenacity stood out. He continued without perturbation to risk his life and freedom. If it is said that there were others like him even in those hard days, it is no less true that there were far more unlike him. Lenin could but see in him perhaps not an inspired but a stubborn organizer, perhaps not a distinguished but a persevering party man, taking prison life or exile in his stride, returning to his party work without a breathing spell. It is not necessary to idealize the pre-war Stalin to understand this.

Such attributes of character as slyness, faithlessness, the ability to exploit the lowest instincts of human nature [writes Trotsky] are developed to an extraordinary degree in Stalin and, considering his strong character, represent mighty weapons in a struggle. Not, of course, any struggle. The struggle to liberate the masses requires other attributes. But in selecting men for privileged positions, in welding them together in the spirit of the caste, in weakening and disciplining the masses, Stalin's attributes were truly invaluable and rightfully made him a leader of the bureaucratic reaction. [Nevertheless] Stalin remains a mediocrity. His mind is not only devoid of range but is even incapable of logical thinking. Every phrase of his speech has some immediate practical aim. But his speech as a whole never rises to a logical structure.

And again, in dealing with the reaction of the July days between the February and October revolutions, Trotsky writes:

The mass movement had in the meantime weakened considerably. Half of the party had gone underground. The preponderance of the machine had grown correspondingly. Inside of the machine, the rôle of Stalin grew automatically. That law operates unalterably throughout his entire political biography and forms, as it were, its mainspring.

It is hard to contest a single word in the sentences quoted. They describe qualities which explain Stalin's rise not only in the post-Lenin reaction, but his slower and much more modest rise during Lenin's lifetime. The incapacity for logical thinking prevented him from developing as an independent political thinker, but he had a quality which enabled him to repeat day in and day out, in his own peculiar style, the simple, hammer-logical ideas of Lenin, and that made him a sufficiently reliable party organizer. His quality of vindictiveness was directed, in the pre-revolutionary days, primarily against backsliders and all other opponents of the party, so that he gave the impression, apart from isolated incidents and expressions of which few could have been aware, of political firmness. Even his quality of exploiting "the lowest instincts of human nature" must, in those days, have taken the form, so far as was generally known, of appealing to the popular hatred of Czarism and its social iniquities.

Stalin's Positive and Negative Qualities

As for that law which Trotsky calls the mainspring of Stalin's rôle and evolution—rightly, we believe—its operation, too, was different at different times and under different controls. The period of post-1905 reaction was not the period of mass action. It was a period of trying to hold the party together, of preventing complete disintegration. The party was reduced to its local committees, important in general, exceptionally important in countries with an illegal movement, trebly important in the days of reaction. In the "committee" Stalin felt at home and probably discharged well the task of tasks—imbuing others with tenacity, with contempt for the deserters and liquidators, with contempt for bourgeois public

opinion about Bolshevism and especially about its then prevalent "expropriations."

What held true before 1917 must have held true during and after 1917.

Stalin, *by himself*, was and certainly is incapable of logical thinking, let alone thinking in terms of revolutionary socialist internationalism and of the Marxian scientific method. He could repeat what Lenin said, not as well as some but better than many. But for that he had to know what Lenin said or thought. When Lenin's views were not yet known, during the first period after the overturn of Czarism, Stalin showed that he understood Bolshevism to mean that the proletariat, once the autocracy is destroyed, supports bourgeois democracy as a radical but more-or-less loyal opposition. The socialist perspective was only a perspective and a remote one. He supported the bourgeois Kerensky régime "in so far as it is not reactionary"—the same formula that some self-styled Trotskyists today use to support the Stalin régime.

But his rôle before Lenin's return to Russia did not and could not rule him out of the party leadership, in Lenin's eyes. Far more prominent leaders of the party took a position not one whit better than Stalin's and often worse. What's more, they maintained it more persistently than Stalin. Stalin had made disastrous mistakes from the standpoint of political leadership. But Lenin could not make lasting reproaches for that. He did not regard him as an outstanding political leader in his own right, and consequently did not apply to him the severe criteria to which others had to submit and to which they were, so to speak, entitled. You might almost say that it was Stalin's very lack of political distinction, the fact that he laid no claim to independence of political and theoretical thought, his very characteristic of reiterating Lenin's thoughts (even if not very brilliantly), or of carefully reducing his disagreements to brief brushes followed by silent but prompt leaps on to the bandwagon—that made him valuable in the leadership. This is not to be construed in the least as an apology for political servility to the "party chief." It is simply that, politically speaking, Stalin was most useful when he faithfully repeated, as best he could, the ideas of Lenin. Not laying claim to being a politician in his own right, his errors could all the more easily be corrected.

So far—the negative. But positively, his usefulness in the days of preparing for the insurrection and in the days of the civil war that followed it assured him a place in the leadership, if not an eminent place then a solid place nevertheless. He had a "hand that did not tremble," and for those who are interested in the revolution getting off the paper to which it is normally confined, this is not a quality to sneeze at. By his very nature and bent, he was able, better than many others, to get the coöperation of all the lower ranks of the party machine—the committeemen of yesterday and today—and to protect the interests of the party, which he identified more and more with the party machine. Where a merciless hand was needed—as it so often is in revolutionary times, the critical observers to the contrary notwithstanding—his was always available, often used and sure to be merciless. In negotiations and such-like activities, he could more often than not be well trusted to represent the interests of the revolution: he had will-power; he could not easily be swayed by arguments of the adversary; his brutality could easily appear as imperious insistence; his cunning and slyness as effective ruse and guile in outwitting and outwitting the enemy; his penchant for intrigue and forming a clique around himself as a sympathetic and tender ear for the woes and vicissitudes of the misunderstood comrade.

The Committee Man as Leader

In the period of revolutionary rise and under the control of a revolutionary party, not all of Stalin's characteristics were negative. In the service of the revolution, many of them could be and were put to such uses as explain without too much difficulty his specific place in the leadership and Lenin's evaluation of him as a leader. A leadership, not on paper, but at the head of a real revolutionary party, cannot be made of men with uniformly high qualifications or with qualifications equally applicable in all fields.

A leadership composed only of Lenins and Trotskys is an alluring but utopian idea. *With all things properly arranged*, the Zinovievs and Stalins and all other first-class second-raters also find their place in the leadership and enrich its capacities. You cannot have an opera with only lyric sopranos in it, or a complex machine of fine steel without bronze or brass or baser alloys in it.

Calling Trotsky and Stalin the two most able men in the leadership was no mistake on Lenin's part. As we understand it, he meant that either one of them, by virtue of the qualities each possessed, could hold the party together and lead it—each, that is, in his own way. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Pyatakov, Bukharin—the only other men Lenin mentions in his testament—were all leaders of the highest caliber. All belonged uncontestedly in the leadership. But none had the qualifications to hold the party firmly together and *lead* it. But because Lenin was not concerned merely with holding it together but with *how* it would be held together and *by whom*, he ended his testament with the appeal to remove, not Trotsky, but Stalin from his post and from his power. The appeal proved unsuccessful.

To explain the rise of Stalin and the unsuccess of Lenin's appeal—which was at the same time an appeal for the restoration and burgeoning of workers' democracy—Trotsky wastes little more than a passing comment on the ludicrous and infantile assertion that "Bolshevism leads to Stalinism" which has been popularized in recent years by deserters from the socialist struggle who would like to cover their retreat behind the cloud of a "theory," and by some helpless and hopelessly disoriented victims of Stalinism who take the odd revenge of supporting Stalin's claim to Lenin's succession. One of these "anti-Stalinist" deserters, who, in quick succession, abjured Bolshevism, Trotskyism and socialism itself, and then remembered with such indignation that Marx could not make a respectable living for his family that he sped with unerring instinct to a job which keeps him in the style to which his poetry did not accustom him—now calls himself a "radical democrat." Irony! If Stalin had not appeared in April, 1917, and if the Bolshevik Party had not re-armed itself to make the Bolshevik revolution; and if (what was most unlikely) bourgeois democracy had consolidated itself in Russia—it is more than likely that the "disintegration of Bolshevism" would have taken the form of conversion into the mere left-wing opposition of bourgeois democracy, into the party of "radical democrats," with Stalin most probably that party's boss. That was how many Bolshevik leaders, Stalin prominently included, practically conceived of Lenin's formula of the "democratic dictatorship of proletariat and peasantry" that was to be established on the ruins of Czardom.

But Stalin's transformation from revolutionist to reactionary—a not uncommon change, unfortunately, as Mussolini showed—did not take place under conditions of the maintenance of bourgeois society, or of its restoration. His transformation is unique. Hence the complications; hence the mys-

tery. To this transformation, Trotsky devotes a long and, alas, the unfinished section of his book. Enough remains of the draft, however, to preclude ambiguity about Trotsky's views.

Trotsky seeks the cause of the change neither in the alleged inherence of Stalinism in Bolshevism nor in the all-determining power of Stalin's personal character. He looks instead for those social and political factors which lent themselves to the actual evolution of Stalin and Stalinism and which were, in turn, significantly influenced by this evolution. Risking misunderstanding and vulgarization, Trotsky nevertheless does not hesitate to trace the Stalinist type, in embryo, to the old pre-war Bolshevik militant, the "committeeman."

We have often heard the argument made in the small revolutionary group: "How can we have bureaucrats among us? Bureaucratism is a social phenomenon. There are bureaucrats in the trade unions, because they have an economic base and a stake in capitalism. But among us? Aren't our officials poorly paid—when they are paid at all? Be a Marxist—show me the economic base for our alleged bureaucratism! You cannot? Then be off with you, and let's hear no more about bureaucratism in our little revolutionary party!" This is sacred ritual in the SWP, for example.* You are puzzled to know if the argument is made out of village ignorance or know-better demagoguery. In either case, Trotsky smothers it—for good, we hope—in a couple of paragraphs. He is speaking, understand, of Lenin's Bolshevik Party, which was small, revolutionary, self-sacrificing from top to bottom, and worse than poor.

The habits peculiar to a political machine were already forming in the underground. The young revolutionary bureaucrat was already emerging as a type. The conditions of conspiracy, true enough, offered rather meager scope for such of the formalities of democracy as electiveness, accountability and control. Yet undoubtedly the committeemen narrowed these limitations and considerably more than necessity demanded and were far more intransigent and severe with the revolutionary workingmen than with themselves, preferring to domineer even on occasions that called imperatively for lending an attentive ear to the voice of the masses.

One of the keys, and not the least important one, to the mystery of Stalin's rise, is an understanding of the relationship between the bureaucratism and power of the "committeeman"—"the young revolutionary bureaucrat"—on the one side, and the activity of the masses, their capacities at any given stage for effecting social changes, on the other. It gives clearer meaning to what Trotsky calls the "law" governing the change in the rôle and evolution of Stalin.

Even the Bolshevik Party cadres [Trotsky continues elsewhere], who enjoyed the benefit of exceptional revolutionary training, were definitely inclined to disregard the masses and to identify their own special interests with the interests of the machine on the very day after the monarchy was overthrown. What, then, could be expected of these cadres when they became an all-powerful state bureaucracy? It is unlikely that Stalin gave this matter any thought. He was flesh of the flesh of the machine and the toughest of its bones.

The Degeneration Takes a New Turn

In the course of the decay of the Bolshevik revolution, these bones acquired such flesh and muscles and flesh and mind and *social purpose* as nobody expected or foresaw, not Lenin or Trotsky and not even Stalin (in making this last point, Trotsky is entirely correct).

The revolution will flower into socialism provided it is

*This is no doubt one of the reasons why Trotsky's work received such curt and indifferent—even cool—treatment in the SWP press, especially when contrasted to the whole series of unrestrained eulogies written on the "work" of the SWP chief, which is a studied apology for bureaucratism.

soon followed by successful revolution in the more advanced countries of the West. The very barbarism of Czarist Russia made it possible for the working class of that country to be the first to take socialist power. In this respect, Trotsky's brilliant theory of the "permanent revolution" was brilliantly confirmed in 1917. But the same barbarism, to mention no other considerations, will prevent the realization of socialism by national efforts alone. This, too, was confirmed, not only tragically but in a unique and unpredicted way. If the revolution in the West does not come, said *all* the Bolsheviks, our revolution will perish. "Perish" simply meant: capitalism will be restored in Russia; the outside capitalist world will lend its overwhelming forces to the remaining capitalistic elements inside of Russia and crush the workers' government and its ruling party—all of it.

This did not happen. But the revolution did perish. Given the continued failure of the proletarian revolution to win in the West, the power of the working class was doomed in Russia—nothing else could save it. But if the prospect of maintaining workers' power in Russia alone was hopeless, the prospect of restoring capitalism in Russia was not hopeful. Fifty years earlier, the failure of the Paris Commune meant its automatic replacement by capitalist rule. First, the revolution that established the Commune was purely spontaneous, unprepared and did not have the enormous advantage of the directing brain and spinal column of a modern revolutionary political party. Second and more important, capitalism everywhere was still on the powerful upswing. The Russian revolution, on the other hand, was planned, prepared for and carried through by an increasingly powerful and integrated political machine, in the best sense of the word. It overthrew a putrescent régime and destroyed almost overnight a small and economically feeble capitalist class, so that whatever capitalistic elements remained in the country, the peasantry primarily, had no important and strong *urban* counterpart and consequently, no national class capable of giving it leadership in the struggle to restore capitalism. Capitalism cannot be restored or established by the "blind workings" of economy in general, but only by the living classes that these "blind workings" create. The capitalist class of the rest of the world, however—what of it? For reasons we need not dwell on—the fact alone suffices for the moment—it proved incapable of crushing the revolution by armed force in the early years. In the second and, we think, more decisive place, the decay of the revolution—what Trotsky calls the "unwinding process"—took place simultaneously with the decay and agony of capitalist society itself—a most significant conjunction of processes. Trotsky is more correct than is explicit in his own views when he writes: "The Russian Thermidor would have undoubtedly opened a new era of bourgeois rule, if that rule had not proved obsolete throughout the world."

In agony itself, capitalism could not overturn the workers' state. Yet the rule of the workers could not be saved. What could be saved, and what was saved, and what was extended and expanded and rooted as deeply as never before were the special privileges of a new bureaucracy. It is in the course of this process that Stalin's qualities took the form they did, for that is what they were best suited to. In the process he emerged as traitor to the proletarian revolution and socialism—but hero, and rightly so considered, to the beneficiaries of the new régime.

For reasons already mentioned—more and even more cogent reasons could be adduced without number—the counter-revolution could not take place in the name of capitalist

property or in its interests. The reaction in Russia took the form of a vast weariness of the masses. But if they were worn out in the rigorous struggle to maintain socialist power, they were not so worn out as to tolerate, let alone welcome, a restoration of capitalist rule. They would not surrender power to the classes they had overthrown in 1917. In this determination, they were joined not only by the ruling party in general, but by the party bureaucracy in particular. The restoration of capitalism would mean the crushing not only of the working class, *but of the bureaucracy as well*, whether in its 1923 form or in its form today. Whatever else the bureaucracy is ready to endure, that is a fate that is too much like death; it in no way corresponds to its aspirations or its evolution.

Revolutionary Bureaucrat and Stalinist Bureaucrat

The counter-revolution could be carried through successfully only in the name of the revolution and for its ostensible preservation. What was really involved was the preservation and extension of the privileges and power of the bureaucracy.

Here it is necessary to be most precise, to distinguish between bureaucracy and *bureaucracy*, to avoid the imprecision which undermines Trotsky's analysis after a certain point. What must be distinguished, and clearly, is the stratum composed of "the young revolutionary bureaucrat" of the revolutionary and early post-revolutionary period, and the *present-day* Stalinist bureaucracy. The former was a *working-class bureaucracy*, or if you please, a revolutionary working-class bureaucracy. Its fate was tied up, consciously and in fact, with the working class, its revolution and *its rule*. In its struggle against the proletarian socialist opposition (Trotskyism), it *reflected*, like every labor bureaucracy, the pressure of hostile classes, but it was animated by the conviction that the maintenance and consolidation of the power of the bureaucracy was the only way in which to save the achievement of the socialist revolution itself. In this case, Trotsky is quite right about Stalin when he says that he did not "think through to the social significance of this process in which he was playing the leading rôle."

But even in this conviction, the bureaucracy was profoundly mistaken. Quite unconsciously, in all probability, it identified its rôle, *mutatis mutandis*, with the rôle of the bureaucracy in bourgeois society. In the latter case, it is absolutely true that, especially as capitalist society decays, the *only* way the rule of capitalism can be maintained is by the bourgeoisie surrendering its *political* power to an all-pervading bureaucracy in order to preserve its social power which is based on the ownership of capital. The contrary is true in the transitional workers' state. There the political power exercised democratically by the working class can be replaced by a ruling bureaucracy, however beneficent and well-meaning, only in the most exceptional circumstances and for the briefest of periods (civil war, for example), for the decisive reason that the *peculiarity* of the rule of the working class lies in the fact that if it does not have political power (if it is not the "proletariat raised to political supremacy"), it does not have any power whatsoever and is in no sense the ruling class.

For this fundamental mistake, the already not-so-very "young revolutionary bureaucrats" paid the heaviest toll. After the opening of the factional struggle in the Bolshevik Party, Trotsky repeatedly declared that the party bureaucracy is opening the road to capitalist restoration, is the channel through which capitalism was pouring. This was popularly understood to mean—and Trotsky unfortunately contributed to this misunderstanding by saying it explicitly on more than

one occasion—that the bureaucracy *aimed* at restoring capitalism. Entirely wrong! It could be held to be true only in one specific and limited sense: the bureaucracy was so undermining the revolutionary resistance of the proletariat as to deprive it of the strength with which to fight off the encroaching capitalist restoration which would enslave it as it would crush the power of the bureaucracy itself. As is known, this is not what happened. The bureaucracy could not rule for the proletariat. Consequence? It could not rule for itself either!

By the bureaucracy here, we are referring primarily to the old Bolshevik bureaucracy and not to its successors—and exterminators. This cannot be overemphasized. For the proletariat to *hold Russia together* required the world revolution which would assure a socialist development for Russia. Without the world revolution, the bureaucracy which shouldered out the working class not only could not assure a socialist development for Russia but *could not hold it together*. That bureaucracy took several political forms: from the "trinity" of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin which began the open struggle against "Trotskyism," *i.e.*, workers' rule—down to the "all-Leninist" bloc of Stalin-Bukharin-Tomsky. It continually weakened the proletariat, undermined its will and power, and brought such chaos into the country as threatened its very integrity. Again and again, "the revolutionary bureaucracy" as a substitute for the proletariat could not hold the country together, could not give it any kind of strength.

What was needed was a "new corps of slave-drivers" (as Trotsky calls it in another book)—what we call the new ruling class in Stalinist Russia, bureaucratic-collectivist Russia. The decaying "revolutionary bureaucracy" contributed not a few members to this new ruling class, but the two are by no means identical. That is why the achievement and consolidation of power by the new bureaucracy was preceded not only by the destruction of the working-class socialist opposition (Trotskyism) but also by the political and physical destruction of all the Zinovievists, all the Bukharinists, all the "conciliators," all the capitulators and virtually all the *original* Stalinist cadres as well, that is, *all* the sections, wings, tendencies, strata of the Bolshevik Party. This important fact is obscured but not refuted by the accidental and purely personal phenomenon of the presence in the leadership of the new régime of a *handful* of the old revolutionists (that is, ex-revolutionists) like Stalin, Molotov and a very few others, a phenomenon with little more significance than the accidental presence in the leadership of the fascist régime of ex-socialists like Mussolini and another handful of turncoats like him.

The fact is symbolically but inadequately represented in a significant passage in Trotsky:

The bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev restrained Stalin. Having undergone long periods of schooling under Lenin, they appreciated the value of ideas and programs. Although from time to time they indulged in monstrous deviations from the platform of Bolshevism and in violations of its ideological integrity, all under the guise of military subterfuge, they never transgressed certain limits. But when the triumvirate split, Stalin found himself released from all ideological restraints.

The passage would be adequate if put in other terms. The Zinovievs, and even the Bukharins (in another way), represented the "revolutionary bureaucracy" and only *deviated*, however monstrously, from Bolshevism, that is, from the concept of workers' power and socialism. The Stalin of today and the class he defends represent an irreconcilable *break* with Bolshevism, an *anti-working class* force in every respect, including the most fundamental.

Stalin: Logical Leader of New Class

To bring this new reactionary class to absolute power was a task which, however unconsciously performed, coincided with Stalin's personal ambitions and was enormously facilitated by his personal characteristics. For this task, he was eminently indicated and useful. Who could more easily lead in the destruction of Bolshevism and the Bolsheviks in the very name of Bolshevism—an old monarchist or Menshevik or an old Bolshevik? Who could more lightly undo the basic achievement of the revolution—the establishment of the working masses as the ruling class—than one who felt organically alien to the masses, who saw in them nothing more than an instrument for the revolutionary “committeemen” whom he regarded as the only safe repository of what he understood by socialism? To whom would socialist science and Marxian tradition be a more superfluous burden when sailing before the winds of social reaction than to a man who never fully grasped them at his best and who regarded them as the toys of intellectuals at his worst? His very incapacity for logical thinking was invaluable in the performance of his social task. The rising bourgeoisie was capable of logical thought, of logical presentation of its historic claims to the public and in the name of progress. The rising proletariat, in its socialist form, is even more capable of doing the same thing and under an even greater necessity to do so. The new ruling bureaucracy in Stalinist Russia need not present an “independent program” in its own name, or in the name of logic. In fact, it cannot, by its very nature, do so. Bastard of history, it can do nothing but falsify history and falsify thought. Given his character, it found in Stalin its eminently “logical” exponent. Will-power to destroy a revolution in its own name, nerveless brutality in the execution of as monstrous a task as history knows, craftiness of the highest (lowest?) order in the successive cutting down of one section of Bolshevism after another or in getting one section to cut down another until there was nothing left—these qualities were required in highly-developed form. Stalin had them.

By himself he accomplished nothing, nor could he. He had social winds in his sails. He was pushed—with what degree of consciousness on his part or theirs is hard to say—by a gathering and powerful social force, the new bureaucracy. It saw in him, all things considered, an ideal representative. It did not hesitate to use the more-or-less capitalistic peasantry to destroy the power of the proletariat and the revolutionists. But not, by Heaven! for the sake of the peasantry or any capitalistic claimant to power. Restore capitalism? Why? In his important appendix to the biography, Trotsky says, without any supporting argument (we do not think there is any) that “the Stalinist bureaucracy is nothing else than the first stage of bourgeois restoration.” In the text, however, Trotsky writes differently and far, far more correctly. The struggle between the new bureaucracy and the petty bourgeoisie “was a direct struggle for power and for income. Obviously the bureaucracy did not rout the proletarian vanguard, pull free from the complications of the international revolution, and legitimize the philosophy of inequality in order to capitulate before the bourgeoisie, become the latter's servant, and be eventually itself pulled away from the state feed-bag.” And further on: “To guard the nationalization of the means of production and of the land, is the bureaucracy's law of life and death, for these are the social sources of its dominant position.”

A thousand times right! To understand it is to begin to introduce the necessary corrective in Trotsky's old position

which is implicitly abandoned in the above passages. The “social sources” of the bureaucracy's dominance are assured them, however, *only* by virtue of their political power, their control of the state—just as the nationalized means of production were the social sources of the proletariat's dominance *only* when it was assured of political power. *Political power, and therefore all power, to the bureaucracy is what Stalin's triumph gave this new ruling class.* More—far more—than any other individual, he so organized the “new corps of slave-drivers” and its system of exploitation so as to build up the mightiest (we do not say “the most durable” but only “the mightiest”) of Russian Empires and thus endowed the slave-drivers as a whole with the greatest power and privilege a ruling class ever enjoyed.

The “Great Man” Theory

What does this achievement, which it would be foolish to deny, do for Stalin as an historical figure? The recent “controversy” over the question: “Is Stalin a great man?” seems to us academic and sterile, a semantic quarrel at best. Everything here depends on your criteria. The English aristocracy still looks upon the great Napoleon as nothing but a miserable monster; the French damn Robespierre as a perverse gnome and—the Stalinists now glorify Ivan the Terrible. It can be freely admitted that Stalin was “underestimated” in the past, but only because, in our view, the social capacities of the new bureaucracy (which should not now, in turn, be overestimated) on which he bases himself were underestimated.

Trotsky is right, we think, in arguing that even Stalin's rise to a super-Caesaro-Papist totalitarian dictatorship is not due to his “genius.” He was pushed to power by the bureaucracy which has no small share in the enjoyment of it. Yet the fact is that as he moved toward his power, Stalin pulled the new bureaucracy along with him, assembled it, gave it what self-confidence it has, codified and assured its privileges and, in general, lifted it to power next to his own throne.

To imagine that the bureaucrats look upon him as a mediocrity is to imagine that they have greater intellectual and cultural capacities than he, greater devotion to ideals in general or socialism in particular. Nothing of the sort is true. The ruling bureaucracy idealizes and worships Stalin with a certain enthusiasm and conviction, to say nothing of gratitude. To them he is a great man, perhaps the greatest in history, and according to their lights they are not far from right. How many men can you find in history who have been so ruthless and thoroughgoing in establishing and protecting the power of a ruling class? Bukharin compared Stalin with Genghis Khan. There is a big difference—the difference between primitive Asiatic despotism riding on Mongol ponies, as it were, and modern totalitarian tyranny whose GPU rides tractors and tanks. From the standpoint of the Stalinist bureaucracy, its *Vozhd* is by far the greater of the two!

There is another standpoint. The great man is the one who by thought or deed or both, and under whatever circumstances, by whatever methods or for whatever class, helped lift mankind a few feet closer to the light, helped it to acquire greater knowledge of itself, greater mastery over nature and society so that it might more speedily free itself from subjection to nature and from all physical and intellectual fetters. From this standpoint, it is doubtful if Stalin qualifies even as the “outstanding mediocrity” of Bolshevism. In measuring Stalin, Trotsky could not but employ the criterion which is, in our times, if not the only one, then at least the overwhelmingly decisive one: What contribution has he made to advanc-

ing the cause of working-class emancipation? Hounded into obscure exile, isolated, writing in the shadow of an assassin in the hire of the all-powerful victor, Trotsky gave his answer: "To me, in mind and feeling, Stalin's unprecedented elevation represents the very deepest fall." We who continue to share

the deepseated socialist convictions which sustained Trotsky to the very end, share this terribly just judgment and comprehend it to the full. No great man ever wore to his death, as Stalin will, the brand of Cain and the stigma of traitor.

MAX SHACHTMAN.

After Ten Years

No one will deny that *The Revolution Betrayed* contains all that Trotsky thought essential to an understanding of Stalinist Russia as a new form of society. In reviewing this timely reprint¹ I propose to re-examine Trotsky's basic analysis of Stalinist production; the role of the working class in the labor process; the social functioning of the bureaucracy.

According to Trotsky, the distinguishing feature of the economy is the capacity to plan owing to the existence of State Property. Apart from the general problem of backwardness, its main defect is the incompetence of the bureaucracy. The fundamental content of the activity of the Soviet government is the struggle to raise the productivity of labor. (p. 79) The bureaucracy claims that the Russian workers lack skill, but the Russian worker is "enterprising, ingenious and gifted." (p. 83) "The difficulty lies in the general organization of labor." And the responsibility for this lies with the bureaucracy. "The Soviet administrative personnel is, as a general rule, far less equal to the new productive tasks than the worker." Productive organization of piecework demands "a raising of the level of administration itself, from the shop foreman to the leaders in the Kremlin." (p. 84) "The bureaucracy tries fatally to leap over difficulties which it cannot surmount." Again: "Not knowing how, and not being objectively able, to put the régime of production in order in a short space of time..." (p. 84) In conclusion: "... the name of that social guild which holds back and paralyzes all the guilds of the Soviet Economy is the bureaucracy." (p. 85)

In regard to the workers Trotsky's main preoccupation is the relation between their wages and the wages of the bureaucracy. It is important to recognize the enormous emphasis and space which Trotsky gives to *consumption* in his analysis of "inequality" and "social antagonisms." What lies, he asks, at the bottom of the continuous repression? His reply is: "Lack of the means of subsistence resulting from the low productivity of labor." (p. 62) He returns to it again and again. "The justification for the existence of a Soviet State as an apparatus for compulsion lies in the fact that the present transitional structure is still full of social contradictions, which in the sphere of *consumption*—most close and sensibly felt by all—are extremely tense, and forever threaten to break over into the sphere of production..."

"The basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in objects of consumption with the resulting struggle of each against all..." Trotsky, of course, is no anarchist. He justifies a certain amount of inequality by the necessity for bourgeois norms of distribution in a transitional régime. This also justifies the state. The gravamen of his charge of betrayal of the

On Trotsky's "The Revolution Betrayed"

revolution is the monstrous growth of the state and the monstrous growth of inequality.

He claims in more than one place that the economy is slowly bettering the position of the toilers. But the future of Soviet society depends upon the world revolution. Either the world revolution enables the Russian proletariat to liquidate the usurpations and incompetence of the bureaucracy, or the further rule of the bureaucracy will lead to a complete liquidation of the conquests of the revolution. Such in brief is Trotsky's economic analysis. The problem of accumulation as such receives no direct treatment and this is not accidental. After the most scrupulous analysis of which he is capable, the present writer finds that Trotsky operates on the principle that once private property is abolished there is no *problem* of accumulation.² If waste and bureaucracy are kept down to a minimum, progressive accumulation is assured. *It is impossible to read this book and learn from it what, if any, is the specific contribution of the proletariat to the building of the socialist society.*

Marx's Theory of Society

Such a difference of view involves the very concepts of Marxian thought. I propose, therefore, to state what in my view is the Marxian conception of society, capitalist, socialist and transitional to socialism, and then to show, in my opinion, Trotsky's sharp and consistent departure from this conception.³

Marx's theory of society is a theory of the activity of men, of men as active in the process of production. The classical economists, having discovered labor as the activity which produces private property, *left it alone* and proceeded to deal only with the material results of this activity. They did not analyze the nature of the activity nor the relationship of the results of the activity to the activity itself. Thus they viewed the movement of society and the division of society according to the division of the products of labor. Marx, on the contrary, based his analysis on the division of labor itself. His philosophy was a philosophy of the activity of men in the labor process. His analysis of capitalist production was therefore the analysis of the labor of man. In capitalism, labor was *alienated from its true function*, the development of man. Thereby it was transformed into its opposite, man's increasing subjugation—and rebelliousness. For Marx, therefore, the essence of private property was the alienation of labor and not the fact that property belonged to private individuals.

² Other writings show the same thought.

³ While agreeing with many of the arguments used by Comrade Johnson against Trotsky's theory that Russia is a "degenerated workers state"—above all the central point that political control by the workers is essential—we do not accept those arguments that proceed from Johnson's position that Russia is a capitalist state and therefore subject to analysis on the basis of the same economic laws that apply under capitalism.—Editors.

¹ *The Revolution Betrayed* by Leon Trotsky. Pioneer Publishers, New York. 308 pp. \$2.00.

Marx states categorically that to see private property as the basis of alienated labor is to turn the truth upside down.

We have, of course, achieved the concept of alienated labor (of alienated life) from political economy as the result of the movement of private property. But in analyzing this concept, it is revealed that if private property appears as the basis as the cause of alienated labor, it is rather a consequence of it, as the gods are not originally the cause but the effect of human confusion of understanding. Later this relationship is turned upside down.

The handing over of his products to another, his alienation; is for Marx the result of his degraded labor, of the type of activity to which the proletariat is condemned. "How could the laborer be opposed to the product of his activity in an alien fashion if he were not estranged in the act of production itself? The product is only the résumé of activity, of production. . . . In the alienation of the object of labor is only crystallized the alienation, the renunciation in the activity of labor itself." Marx believed that this was his special contribution to the analysis of society. He says magnificently: "When one speaks of private property one thinks he is dealing with something outside of man. When one speaks of labor one has to do immediately with man himself. The new formulation of the question already involves its solution."

The result of this alienation of man from the product of his labor is that "his labor is therefore not free but forced, forced labor." That is to say, his labor is not his own free self-activity, the conscious exercise of all his powers, but merely a means to his existence. Secondly, an immediate consequence of this alienation of man from self-activity is the alienation of man from man. Capitalist society was the highest stage of alienation yet reached. As a result it carried to the highest possible stage the contradictions and hypocrisies of all previous class societies.

Alienation of labor corrupted society through and through. The greater the alienation, the greater the necessity of using all manifestations of society, science, art, politics, as a justification for the alienation. The solution is in what Marx calls the appropriation by the proletariat of the enormous possibilities for self-development existing in the objectified labor, the mass of accumulated capital. Man must become universal man, universal in the sense that the *individual* develops all his own *individual* powers in accordance with the stage of development of the species, that is to say, the potentialities embodied in the accumulated mass of productive forces.

The powers of man as an *individual* is the test. "Above all, one must avoid setting the society up again as an abstraction opposed to the individual. The individual is the social entity. The expression of his life . . . is therefore an expression and verification of the life of society."

The most vital expression of the life of the individual is his activity in the labor process. For Marx, it is labor which distinguishes man from the beast. Labor is the truest essence of man. By that he lives and develops himself as a truly social being. But in capitalist society his labor is an inhuman degradation. We have the result that man, the laborer, "feels himself as freely active more in his animal functions, eating and drinking, procreating," whereas in labor, his specifically human function, he functions more like an animal. "The animal becomes the human and the human the animal."

Marx's philosophy is not one thing and his economics and politics something else. His analysis of capitalist production, of accumulation, of consumption, flow from this philosophical concept of man in society with which he began. The quotations above are from his early economic and philosophical

manuscripts. *Capital* and the writings of his maturity are only the embodiment and concretization of these ideas. The difference between these conceptions and Trotsky's conceptions of Stalinist Russia can be seen immediately in the analysis of Russia itself.

Stalinist Society and Alienated Labor

Where in modern society is there so perfect an example of alienated labor and its consequences as in Stalinist Russia? Trotsky after page upon page about wages and consumption suddenly states late in his volume the following: "The transfer of the factories to the State changed the situation of the workers only juridically." In other words, in the labor process he was left just where he was. First, this is not true. And if it were a whole new world begins. But to continue: "... In order to raise [the low] level [of technique and culture], the new state resorted to the old methods of pressure upon the muscles and nerves of the workers. There grew up a corps of slave drivers. The management of industry became super-bureaucratic. The workers lost all influence whatever upon the management of the factory."

This is the situation of the proletariat today in production. What is there new or socialist in this? How does the mode of labor of the worker in Stalinist Russia differ from the alienated labor of the worker in capitalist production? Trotsky points out similarities. The differences, if any, and their importance, are outside of his consideration.

Failing to base himself upon the alienation of labor in the process of production, Trotsky fails to see the consequence of this upon the bureaucracy itself. Of what theoretical validity is his constant emphasis upon the incompetence of the bureaucracy? The Soviet bureaucracy is a reflection of the law of motion of the Soviet economy. The bureaucracy has no free will. It consumes more than the proletariat. But its social life within itself is a form of jungle existence. No member of the bureaucracy, except perhaps Stalin, knows whether tomorrow his whole life may not be cut short and he himself and all his family, friends and assistants disgraced, murdered or sent into exile. The various strata of the bureaucracy address each other in the same tone and manner as the bureaucracy as a whole addresses the proletariat. If the proletariat is imprisoned in the factories, the members of the ruling party are subjected to a regimentation, and unceasing surveillance and inquisition that make the coveted membership in the party a form of imprisonment. The Stalinist official, from the highest to the lowest, excludes his wife and family from any participation not only in his public or political life but even in his thinking. It is a measure of protection so that when the arm of the NKVD falls upon him, they will be able to say with honesty that they knew nothing about his political ideas. That is their slender hope of salvation. Friendship is a permanent suspicion. The risk of betrayal by one chance word is too great. This catalogue of crime, fear, humiliation, degradation, the alienation from human existence of a whole class (or caste), is the fate of those who benefit by the alienation of labor. As for the proletariat, at least a third of the labor force is an industrial reserve army herded in concentration camps. That is the Stalinist society, rulers and ruled. It is the ultimate, the most complete expression of class society, a society of alienated labor.

In socialist society or in a society transitional to socialism, politics, science, art, literature, education all become or are in process of becoming truly social. The *individual* is able to exercise his gifts to the highest capacity, to become truly univer-

sal, because of the essentially *collective* life of the society in which he lives. Look at Stalinist society. No individual is more "political" than the individual in Stalinist society. Nowhere are art, literature, education, science, so integrated with "society." That is the appearance. In reality, never before has there been such a prostitution of all these things for the corruption and suppression of the direct producer, with the resulting degradation of the producers and managers alike. From what aspects of Marxian theory is it possible to call this barbarism a part of the new society envisaged by Marx as emerging from the contradictions of capitalist society? But a false analysis of the social role of the proletariat in society is *always* either cause or effect of a false analysis of the proletariat in the process of accumulation.

Trotsky, the Proletariat and Accumulation

Now let us see what role Trotsky gives to the proletariat. He says, for example, that for the regulation and application of plans, two levers are needed: "the political lever, in the form of a real participation in leadership of the interested masses themselves, a thing which is unthinkable without Soviet democracy; and a financial lever," a stable rouble. But when he concretizes leadership of the interested masses, we find that he is referring to the interest of the masses in the quality of products in so far as it affects their consumption.

"The Soviet products are as though branded with the gray label of indifference. Under a nationalized economy *quality* demands a democracy of producers and consumers, freedom of criticism and initiative." (p. 276) This is no casual statement. It comes in the chapter "Whither the Soviet Union?" where he is summarizing his position. On the previous page he had made it less sharp but more revealing. State planning, he writes, brings to the front "the problem of *quality*," bureaucratism destroys the creative initiative and the feeling of responsibility without which there is not, and cannot be, qualitative progress" (p. 275). Then comes what is, perhaps, the most astonishing statement in the book, from the point of view already enunciated: "The ulcers of bureaucratism are perhaps not so obvious in the big industries, but they are devouring, together with the cooperatives, the light and food producing industries, the collective farms, the small local industries—that is, all those branches of economy which stand nearest to the people" (p. 275). *So that Trotsky finds that there is more "bureaucratism" in light industry than in heavy.*

We want to leave no misunderstanding whatever in the minds of the reader as to our fundamental principled opposition to this analysis by Trotsky of bureaucracy and the relation to it of the proletariat and production. In "The State and Revolution," Lenin states: "Under capitalism democracy is restricted, cramped, curtailed, mutilated by all the conditions of wage-slavery, the poverty and misery of the masses. *This is why and the only reason why* (emphases mine—J. R. J.) the officials of our political and industrial organizations are corrupted—or, more precisely, tend to be corrupted—by the conditions of capitalism, why they betray a tendency to become transformed into bureaucrats, i.e., into privileged persons divorced from the masses and superior to the masses.

"This is the *essence* of bureaucracy, and until the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown, even proletarian officials will inevitably be "bureaucratized to some extent."

But even when the capitalists have been expropriated and the bourgeoisie overthrown, the *essence* of bureaucracy can remain or recur owing to the cramped, curtailed, mutilated life

of the masses. But whence comes this cramping, this curtailment, this mutilation of the life of the masses? Is this a question of consumption and quality of goods? Or of light and heavy industry? Is it necessary to quote again Marx's famous summation of hundreds of pages on the worker in *heavy industry* and the General Law of Capitalist Accumulation when he says that "be his payment high or low," the accumulation of capital leads on the part of the worker to accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation? (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 709.) But production in Stalinist Russia is not capitalist? Very well. Let the followers of Trotsky's theory demonstrate that accumulation of misery, agony of toil, etc., in the production mechanism of the Workers' State, the state of planned economy, let them demonstrate that that is not "the reason and the only reason" why the officials of the political and industrial organizations of Stalinist Russia become corrupted and transformed into privileged persons, divorced from the masses and superior to them. Trotsky's conception of the term "bureaucracy" is not ours.

Marx, the Proletariat, and Accumulation

Twenty-five years after he had written the early manuscripts, Marx stated in *Capital* that it was a matter of life and death for society to change the degraded producer of alienated labor into universal man. Presumably this was *only* philosophy. It would be interesting to have a symposium as to what interpretations a body of Marxists would give to the following: "Modern industry, indeed, compels society, under penalty of death, to replace the detail-worker of today, crippled by lifelong repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs, are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers." (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 534.) Life and death for society! Marx did not use such words lightly. Here he uses them twice on a single page. To the extent that one accepts this passage, one is penetrating to the heart of the Marxian theory of society and the theory of accumulation. Marx was the last man in the world to base such a conception of universal man upon anything but the economic necessities of society.

It is to be understood that the degradation (and the revolt) is inherent in capitalist accumulation, or if you prefer, in the accumulation of Modern Industry *where labor is alienated*. In his analysis of machinery and modern industry, Marx points out that the "special skill of each individual insignificant factory operative vanishes as an infinitesimal quantity before the science, the gigantic physical forces, and the mass of labor that are embodied in the factory mechanism and, together with that mechanism, constitute the power of the 'master.'" (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 462.) Let the 1946 theoreticians of the degenerated Workers' State show that this gigantic bureaucratic mechanism in Russia confronts the individual worker with economic and political consequences other than those of capitalism.

The bureaucracy uses the old methods of pressure upon the worker. It is the greatest error of Trotsky that he nowhere in his book seems to find it necessary to answer (1) that the old methods of pressure are rooted in the relations of the expropriated pauperized proletarians to accumulated labor; (2) that this relation determines the economic movement. The present writer, as is known, believes that Stalinist Russia is a form of State Capitalism. He has no wish to hide that in this article,

nor could he do so if he tried. But the fact remains that the desperate struggle for the productivity of labor, today at least, and for some years now, *compels* the bureaucracy to pay the individual proletarian at his value. From this follow certain economic consequences. The raising of the level of productivity, according to Trotsky the fundamental content of the Soviet government, can be accomplished in only one way, expansion of the mass of accumulated labor, decrease of the relative quantity of living labor. I submit that expansion in the degenerated Workers' State is governed by the amount of surplus labor at its disposal after all the necessary expenses have been met. Now Marx's thesis, in the analysis of capitalist production, was that at a certain stage, the increased surplus labor which was necessary for the continued expansion and development of society on new foundations could be met only by entirely new perspectives of productivity. These could be opened up only by the proletariat, appropriating the mass of accumulated labor and using it to develop its own potentialities. Thereby it elevated the whole social system to a new level. But just so long as the proletariat continued in the stage of degradation, so the ruling class, bureaucracy or bourgeoisie, caste or class, would be compelled to raise productivity "by the old methods of pressure." Precisely because of this, the contradiction between the relatively decreasing labor force and the resultant increase in the *mass* but the fall in the *rate*, of surplus labor, becomes the theoretical premise of economic collapse. The greater the degeneration of the Workers' State the more powerful the functioning of this law.

Trotsky, Consumption and Production

What, in Trotsky's analysis, is the relation between consumption and production in Russia? This is his *solitary* reference: "Superficial 'theoreticians' can comfort themselves, of course, that the distribution of wealth is a factor secondary to its production. The dialectic of interaction, however, retains here all its force." The dialectic of interaction! This fundamental problem he dismisses with a phrase. But immediately goes on to make the tremendous statement: "The destiny of the state-appropriated means of production will be decided in the long run according as these means of personal existence devolve in one direction or another." The future of planned economy then depends on consumption. Then follows a characteristic analogy of a ship declared collective property but whose first class passengers have "coffee and cigars" and the third class passengers nothing. "Antagonisms growing out of this may well explode the unstable collective." (p. 239)

Equally unfortunate is his treatment of the thesis that Russia may be a form of state capitalism. He admits (and no educated Marxist would dare to deny) the theoretical possibility of an economy in which the bourgeoisie as a whole constitutes itself into a stock company and by means of the state administers the whole national economy. "The economic laws of such a régime would present no mystery." Good. But then he proceeds to analyze the law of the average rate of profit which concerns the *distribution* of the surplus value among the capitalists. That is no problem. The relevant law is the law of the falling rate of profit. The problem is whether the national economy would be able to overcome the contradiction between the necessity of lessening and lowering the relative consumption of wage labor and at the same time accumulating sufficient surplus labor to continue the increase of expansion. Today, 1946, it is no longer a theoretical problem.

"In Accordance With a Plan"

In a society of alienated labor, that is to say, in a society of

such low productivity as compels the antagonisms of alienation, the idea of a planned economy is a fiction. The Soviet State undoubtedly was the first to distribute capital to those spheres of production which expansion especially required. In so doing it led the world. But today, 1946, isn't it perfectly obvious that no capitalist society distributes capital any longer according to the sphere of greater profit? Planning is merely a form of rationalization. Monopoly capitalism was progressive in relation to individual capitalism. But it grew out of the contradictions of individual capitalism. It was a capitalistic method of attempting to solve those contradictions and merely sharpened them. In the same way planning today, without the emancipation of labor, arises out of the contradictions of monopoly capitalism and, like all rationalization, is a more highly developed and refined form of exploitation, not lessening but increasing unbearably all antagonisms. How is it possible to plan socially when society is torn as it is by alienated labor and all the economic, political and social contradictions flowing from it? When Marx says that production by "freely associated men" will be "consciously regulated" by them in accordance with "a settled plan" he means literally and precisely that. The plan is the *result* of the freedom of individuals in society. No plan of bureaucrats, class or caste, can create anything else but chaos and crisis. As long as a section of society other than the proletariat controls the surplus labor, the plan can become the greatest calamity that can befall human society.

Trotsky once asked Shachtman "Does Shachtman wish to say in relation to the U.S.S.R. that the state ownership of the means of production has become a brake upon development and that the extension of this form of property to other countries constitutes economic reaction?" (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 124.) This writer replies unhesitatingly "Yes." "*In relation to the U.S.S.R.*," in 1940 and in 1946, state-ownership in the Soviet zone in Germany, in Poland, in Yugoslavia, and wherever else it is instituted, is reactionary in all aspects, economic and otherwise. There is no economic progressiveness in totalitarianism. The complete degradation of labor cannot be in any circumstances progressive. It cannot raise the productivity of labor, the fundamental criterion, except by the old methods of pressure. And it is precisely because class society cannot do otherwise that all state ownership will end either in totalitarianism or social revolution.

This false conception of "plan" permeates the thought of Trotsky, but particularly in his later years. In 1938 he wrote "The disintegration of capitalism has reached extreme limits, likewise the disintegration of the old ruling class. The further existence of this system is impossible. The productive forces must be organized in accordance with a plan." (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 8.) The formulation is characteristic and characteristically false. Once the question is posed that way, of necessity the second question then arises "Who will accomplish this task—the proletariat or a new ruling class of 'commissars.' . . . But the problem is not to organize the productive forces "in accordance with a plan." The problem is to abolish the proletariat as proletariat and release the creative energies of hundreds of millions of men suppressed by capitalism. Released from capitalist degradation they can plan. The guiding party, the administration or superintendence, the state, must be the *expression* of the free producers. These cannot be the expression of the need for the productive forces to be organized in accordance with a plan. The proletariat is the most important part of the productive forces. To say that these must be organized in accordance with a plan merely makes the proletariat a

part of the plan. On the contrary the plan is a part of the proletariat, but of the proletariat emancipated.

Trotsky understood as few men have ever done the creative power of the proletariat in revolution. But the full, the complete significance of the creative power of the proletariat in the construction of the socialist economy always eluded him. In the Trade Union dispute, crucial for any understanding of Russian developments, Lenin told Trotsky: "Comrade Trotsky's fundamental mistake lies precisely in that he approached . . . the very questions he himself raised, as an administrator." He told him again: "It is wrong to look only to the elected persons, only to the organizers, administrators, etc. These, after all, are only a minority of prominent people. We must look to the rank and file, to the masses." (*Selected Works*, Vol. IX, pp. 3-80.) Fifteen years after, the same error which Lenin attacked so fiercely and to which he referred in his testament,

appears almost unchanged in "The Revolution Betrayed." The approach is in essence administrative. For many years Trotsky led a profound and brilliant opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy despite his fundamentally false theoretical orientation. But a false theory always takes its toll in the end. It is taking toll of our movement today. Finally a word to those who think that this conception of the role of the proletariat belongs to some distant future after the good bureaucrats have organized production "in accordance with a plan" and raised the level of the masses. It is necessary to refer these vulgar materialists and sceptics to Trotsky himself who quotes and wholeheartedly approves Lenin's statement that the masses must *begin* to institute the new régime *on the day after the revolution*. That they will do, but they will need leaders and *the leaders must begin with the concepts of the new régime clearly in mind*.

J. R. JOHNSON.

A Note On the Defense and Nature of Stalinist Russia

The following article by Albert Goldman, leader of the former Minority Group of the Socialist Workers Party (a great section of which under his leadership, joined the Workers Party), is a presentation of his views on a question on which THE NEW INTERNATIONAL and the WP have a fully developed different position. But in line with our practice we are publishing his views as a discussion article. We believe this to be in the best tradition of revolutionary Marxism. More important than that, however, Comrade Goldman's article is a contribution on a subject which continues to remain one of the most important before the international revolutionary socialist movement. The publication of this article is not the opening of a discussion on the Russian question which we have carried on several previous occasions. Its publication is for the purpose of acquainting our readers with the views of the writer.

Readers of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL are, of course, familiar with its views, namely, that Russia is a bureaucratic collectivist society; a new exploitive social order; the most powerful counter-revolutionary force in the world today, pursuing an imperialist policy of its own and, from the point of view of the masses, no different from the imperialism of monopoly capitalism. Under bureaucratic collectivism, Russian society is a "slave" society for the mass of workers and peasants, having not the slightest resemblance to socialism.

We do not agree with Comrade Goldman's comments on our theoretical analysis of the character of the Russian state. That there are difficulties involved in the theory, goes without saying, but they are as nothing when compared to those involved in the theory of "a degenerated workers' state," or that of Russia as a capitalist-fascist state. With the aid of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism we have been able to develop a valid estimate of Russia's role and to orient our movement correctly in world events as against all others during the past almost seven years. The same cannot be said for those who adhered to the "degenerated workers' state" concept. Further, it is our opinion that the views of Comrade Goldman represent a moving away from that untenable theory held by the official organizations of the Fourth International, toward the views of the Workers Party and thus represent a particularly interesting contribution to the discussion.—(Editor.)

From the point of view of those struggling for the socialist revolution the outstanding fact of World War II is that the revolution did not emerge from the war to destroy the Stalinist bureaucracy as we hoped and expected, but that the Stalinist bureaucracy was the greatest

single factor in preventing a successful socialist revolution in Europe.

One can point to certain beginnings of a socialist revolutionary movement at the time when the Hitler military machine was cracking up; one can point to certain sections of Europe where undoubtedly the masses were ready to take power. But all this does not and cannot alter the *fact* that there has been no revolution in Europe for the fundamental reason that the Stalinist bureaucracy prevented the socialist revolution from developing.

In Eastern Europe the Stalinist armies crushed every attempt on the part of the masses to take power and at the present moment the masses of those countries are practically slaves of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In the important countries of Western Europe the Stalinist parties have gained command over the decisive sections of the working class and have, by their policies prevented any attempt at revolution. In France and Italy the workers have flocked to the Stalinist banner because they want a socialist revolution. Without the Stalinist parties only the bayonets of the American and English imperialist armies could have crushed any revolutionary uprising. It can be said with the greatest of certainty that the Stalinist bureaucracy is the most powerful counter-revolutionary factor on the European scene.

The contention is put forward that our mistake in believing that the revolution would arise as a result of the war and destroy Stalinism is one involving tempo. (We also thought that if the revolution did not arise and destroy the Stalinist bureaucracy, the forces of capitalism would do away with it. But that is immaterial for the argument in this article.) We can grant the proposition that our mistake is one of tempo but this does not in the least modify the proposition that the victory of the Stalinist armies is the greatest danger to the socialist revolution. This has been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt and every serious revolutionist who up to now has advocated the "defense of the Soviet Union" should take that factor into consideration in determining his attitude to that slogan.

Trotsky was careful to explain that our defense of Russia means primarily an explanation to the masses of what we defend and how we defend it. He was exceedingly anxious to have everyone clearly understand that we are not for one moment defending any of the policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy. But this did not do away with the fact that in any war between Russia and a capitalist country those who were for the defense of the Soviet Union were for the victory of the "Red" army and were obliged to do their best to help achieve that victory.

But at present, knowing what the consequences of a victory of the Stalinist army must be to the socialist revolution, is it still possible to advocate the defense of Russia, that is, the victory of the Stalinist armies? The answer is that a revolutionist who is not bound by a formula will not do so. The answer is that a revolutionary Marxist who sees and accepts the obvious fact that to defend Stalinist Russia means to hope and, if possible, work for the victory of an army that is certain to crush any socialist revolutionary uprising, will give up the slogan of "defense of the Soviet Union."

We have always accepted the idea that the defense of Russia must be subordinated to the interests of the world revolution. We know now what we did not know in 1940—that the victory of the Stalinist army is detrimental to the world revolution just as the victory of any capitalist country would be.

"Nationalized Property—Therefore Defense"

Must the conclusion be drawn from the above that we who advocated "defending the Soviet Union" in 1940 were wrong? Only in the sense that the formula upon which we fundamentally based our defense of Russia was an incorrect one. That formula was "nationalized property—therefore defense." It was the fact that nationalized property was something still left of the 1917 Revolution that made it necessary for some of us to call Russia a "workers' state" even though degenerated. And it was this nationalized property that we said made it necessary for us to defend Russia. That bare formula must now be rejected completely. For it leads to the dangerous conclusion that we defend an army the victory of which can lead only to counter-revolutionary consequences.

Far more correct would it have been had we said that nationalized property under the conditions prevailing in 1940 justified our position of defense. We certainly did not know what the results of the war would be; in fact we expected the proletarian revolution or capitalism to destroy Stalinism. It was correct for us to test to the end the theory that the war may bring the proletarian revolution and it, in its turn, smash the Stalinist bureaucracy. One of the most important of the conditions prevailing in 1940 was the expectation that either the revolution or capitalism would destroy the Kremlin bureaucracy.

One can make out a fair case for the proposition that Trotsky actually thought that defense was necessary in 1940 partly because he expected the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the not too far-distant future. "We might place ourselves in a ludicrous position," he said, "if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall."

Trotsky always felt it necessary to operate on that theory which looked forward to a favorable outcome for the proletarian revolution, until events proved conclusively that it could not be held any longer. Until the very last minute he worked on the theory that the Nazis could be prevented from taking power. There were those who, after the Nazis took

power, pointed out that Trotsky was wrong in this theory, forgetting that it was only such a theory that could constitute the basis of a continuation of the struggle against the Nazis and that a revolutionist had no right to say beforehand that the struggle against the Nazis was in vain.

A somewhat similar situation existed with reference to the question of defending Russia. So long as it was possible to expect that the war and a victory of the Russian armies might lead to a proletarian revolution and the regeneration of Russia, so long was it justifiable to retain the position of its defense.

But if it was justifiable to defend Stalinist Russia in 1940, when history had not as yet showed us what exactly the victory of the Stalinist army would mean, it is criminal to do so now when we know what a victory of the Stalinist army must inevitably lead to.

Defense and the Consciousness of the Masses

The threat which a victory of the Stalinist army presents to the socialist revolution is by itself sufficient to warrant a change from defending Stalinist Russia to non-defense. There are, however, additional factors which should be taken into consideration by those who still cling to the old formula. The plundering of the occupied countries and the enslavement of millions of German and Japanese workers whose only crime was to be drafted into the armies of their oppressors make a change mandatory on the question of defense. How can we ask the workers of Germany and Japan who have experienced the frightful terror of slave labor in Stalin's Russia to defend that country? How can we ask the semi-enslaved workers of the Eastern European countries to defend Stalin's Russia?

Terrible were the crimes of Stalin in executing hundreds of thousands of people who were loyal to the revolution on the pretext that they were enemies of the working class. Dreadful are the conditions of the masses in Russia. But it remains a fact that the masses outside of Russia were never deeply stirred by the crimes of Stalin against the people of that country. Either they were unaware of those crimes or they considered the struggle between Stalin and his opponents as of no concern to them. But now millions of people have become aware of the terrible cruelty of that monster and it is impossible to ask them to help his army to victory and thus help forge their own chains.

It can be said that we always made a distinction between the "Soviet Union" and the Stalinist regime and we never assumed the slightest responsibility for the crimes of Stalin. It was under the best of circumstances a difficult task to make that distinction. At present, however, it is an impossible task. Tell the tortured slaves in the slave labor camps of Russia, tell the semi-slaves of the Eastern European countries that they should only defend the nationalized property and their answer, with venom and hatred will be: but in order to defend this nationalized property I must work for the victory of an army that will bring torture and slavery to me. You who are defenders may be willing to help build your own funeral pyre but not we.

What About the Nature of the Russian State?

Does it follow that we must reject the concept of a degenerated workers' state for Stalinist Russia because we reject its defense? For the present that is not at all necessary.

We can call a junked automobile an automobile although it cannot be used for anything but junk. We call Stalinist Russia a degenerated workers' state because Russia was once a workers' state and at present we do not know what actually is

developing out of it. In truth it is necessary, for the present, to cling to the concept of degenerated workers' state because no one has succeeded in presenting us with a theory as to its nature which has less difficulties than those involved in the theory of degenerated workers' state. What was once a workers' state and subsequently a degenerated workers' state has not developed to a point where we can be certain of its nature.

One can easily admit the difficulties connected with the theory of degenerated workers' state but then the difficulties involved in the theory of bureaucratic collectivism are much greater. On the basis of that theory one must hold that it is possible 1: that a class (bureaucratic collectivist) can arise which does not play a progressive role in comparison with the class (capitalist) it displaces; 2: that a new class can arise, the existence of which can be limited to one country. In a world made interdependent by capitalist imperialism this is indeed a difficult concept—almost as difficult as the theory of socialism in one country.

Marx postulated the theory of the rule of the working class and the development of socialism as a result of the contradictions of capitalism. There is a very strong implication in the theory of bureaucratic collectivism of a social order following capitalism which is not socialism but bureaucratic collectivism. There is, of course, nothing sacred about any theory of

Marx and if events compel us to revise it we should do so. But one should not lightly change a theory which is of tremendous aid in the struggle for socialism. The theory of degenerated worker's state is far more in consonance with Marxism and since the difficulties connected with that theory are less than the difficulties connected with the theory of bureaucratic collectivism, it is to be preferred as against the latter theory.

The theory that state capitalism exists in Stalinist Russia has the advantage of connecting the exploitation that is going on in Russia with capitalist exploitation. But essentially it raises the same problems and difficulties as the theory of bureaucratic collectivism.

To those who would argue that to call Stalinist Russia a degenerated workers' state means that it is necessary to defend it against capitalist attack, we can say with the greatest conviction that history has proved that a degenerated workers' state under a Stalinist regime can do far greater harm to the socialist revolution than some capitalist states.

To defend Stalinist Russia because it is a degenerated workers' state and to disregard the fact that to defend it means to work for the victory of an army that is sure to crush the every attempt at socialist revolution is to become a prisoner of formulas. No real Marxist is a prisoner of formulas.

ALBERT GOLDMAN.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS ON CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933

Of The New International, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1946.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.

Before me, a notary public in and for the state and county aforesaid, personally appeared Henry Judd, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of The New International and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in Section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor and business managers are: Publisher, Max Shachtman; Editor, Max Shachtman; Managing Editor, Ernest Erber; Business Manager, Henry Judd; all of 114 West 14th Street, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Max Shachtman, President; Albert Gates, Vice-President; both of 114 West 14th Street, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee of in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustee, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds or other securities than as so stated by him.

HENRY JUDD, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16th day of September, 1946.

JOSEPH LEVIN, Notary Public.

(My commission expires March 30, 1947.)

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American Literature Marches On

An Essay by James T. Farrell

We print below the second and concluding section of this article.—Editors.

II.

In the past, American businessmen as a whole did not have a great interest in or need for culture. Today, this is changing. Culture has become an important field of investment. Culture, and pseudo substitutes for culture, have now been socially organized on the basis of huge business concerns, even of near monopolies. I have tried to deal with this subject elsewhere and here I merely state the fact.¹ This growth of bigness, this commercialization of culture, is evinced in the phenomena of Hollywood, of radio, of the mass circulation magazines, and in the growth of the book business in recent years, especially during the war. With hundreds of millions of dollars now invested in the production of cultural works, and of pseudo or substitute cultural works, there is a mass market for culture. With this mass market, there is an insatiable need for cultural production. By and large, this means that the businessman's starting point for the creation of cultural works is not human needs and human problems as these are seen from the standpoint of the individual artist; to the contrary, the starting point for the creation of cultural works becomes more and more the need to satisfy a market. The market need is gradually casting a bigger and ever bigger shadow over cultural creation. Whereas the plenitude of commodities, the wealth of America, influenced themes and motifs of fiction in the past, largely in the indirect fashion of posing problems of leisure and enjoyment, now the commodity in itself is becoming the deciding factor. In its most crude form, we can see this in the tie-up between songs and sales in radio advertising. Similarly, we now have popular songs in which the title and theme are related to a commodity. Thus, the song, *Rum and Coca Cola*.

In the Film Production Code of the Hollywood studios, the determination that characters in films keep the Ten Commandments according to certain prescriptions is not the only concern: the section on foreign countries, prescribing

that the rulers, institutions and customs of foreign countries be not cast into disrepute is directly a provision which will help to make movies a more salable commodity abroad. Also, it is a commonly known fact that in film studios, great difficulties are encountered in the working out of stories because of the dangers that something in a film may be considered damaging to the good will or products of commodity producers, or to the respect with which various occupations and professions demand that their practitioners be viewed. Not only is it a fact that cultural goods must be sold on a mass market with all that this implies concerning content and standardization, but additionally, in the more popular forms of culture, commodity needs, sales needs, and the like are directly intervening in the very organization of stories. Factors of this kind have entered in an important way into the very creation of cultural works in America. Here, it is necessary at least to mention this in passing. But there are also other factors which demand our consideration.

It is impossible to press an ideology or set of values upon an artist and thereby to guarantee that he will produce serious if not great art. It is impossible in our time to make him create in terms of a fixed set of moral values imposed on him and to guarantee that good results will be attained. It is irrelevant and often inept to tell an artist that he must either affirm or reject life, praise or deride the dignity of man and so on. One of the tensions in American society grows out of a conflict of values, out of the difference between life as it is lived, and life as it is imaged in conventional images and stereotypes. No form of society in the past has shoved aside traditions as ruthlessly as has been the case with capitalism. This is especially the case in America. In contemporary culture, the traditions of the past cannot be expected to be as important as the need of making some added dollars out of cultural production. It is commonly declared (sometimes in voices of lament, sometimes in voices of pride) that America has been traditionless. The relative traditionlessness of America has been one of the reasons why American capitalism has been, historically, a success, in the sense that I have described it as such.

It had less baggage of the past to shed; it was less fettered than was the case in Europe. The relative absence of tradition has been a positive aid to American capitalism. At the same time, it is one of the important factors involved in the relative shallowness of American culture, when we regard culture in terms of humane culture, rather than more broadly so as to include scientific, technological and business culture. This fact also helps to explain important aspects of the motifs, the problems, the types of character and subject matters that have so often been introduced into American writing.

A tension between past and present, expressed by a contrast of bourgeois and feudal values has not been felt concretely in life in America by the broader sections of the American population. Such a theme in fiction, then, was not a major one because it was not a major problem to many Americans. American writers have—even if not with sufficient aesthetic resources—taken their own problems. They will continue to do this, and the critics who make moral, ideological and political demands on them will fail to have a genuine and lasting influence. In the last analysis, the only way that one can really make these kinds of demands really effective is by calling on the policeman to enforce them. However, it is in the form of such demands that critics are speaking to writers and readers in the present time, just as they have in the recent past.

Rather than discuss relevant problems here in reference to these critics, rather than polemicize against them here, rather than try to present substitute demands on the writer, it seems to me that a generalized account of problems that are now faced and a further exploration of the comparisons and contrasts with nineteenth century Russian fiction will, perhaps, be more fruitful.

Some Historical Factors

Faith in progress is, in America, rapidly dissipating. Behind even some of the propaganda for naïve conceptions of progress, there is seething inner doubt. In the realms of commercial writing, where stories in praise of progress and the American Way of Life are concocted in a pattern of simple and naïve eulogies, this inner doubt is unmistakably in-

1: Cf., *The League of Frightened Philistines*, New York, 1945.

tense. The glowing language of Service and Progress, linked with the vulgar and simple-minded economic notions of the 1920's no longer can enlist genuine and widespread belief. The proponents of rugged individualism are and have been gradually shifting their lines of argument and propaganda. Now and then, one or another of them breaks loose and utters a shrill scream. But hardly anyone believes him. The business men have had their day as the popularly conceived masters of destiny, the popularly presented leaders of America, the models on the basis of which youth will pattern itself. The presidents of the period when the business man had his last day in the sunshine as a model and a paragon are scarcely even mentioned. In memory, Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge are forgotten historical characters. The depression has left its ineradicable impressions. The doubt, the disbelief in the capacity of the business to guarantee and secure what had frequently been called the promise of American life—this is a psychological and political fact of contemporary America which cannot be overlooked. It is evinced in the variations of emphasis in the propaganda and advertising of some of the business concerns themselves. One note, for instance, has been that of describing large corporations as guardians, trustees of the people's capital.

This fact has already been reflected in some of our so-called popular culture. Just as some corporations have attempted to present themselves in public in the light of trustees of the people's capital, the peoples' resources, just as the late President Roosevelt popularized the emphasis that the government is "your government," so has it been the case that a number of films, plays, radio plays, novels and stories have been written in order to make a corresponding emphasis, a populist emphasis which flatters "the common people." If we recall the origins of the phrase, "the forgotten man," we will remember that Sumner's "forgotten man" was really the man of the middle class. This forgotten man of the middle class has again been equated with the people, as the representative figure of the people, and as such, he has been flattered. The chief protagonist of most of the late George Ade's fables in slang was this same man of the middle class. Ade's humor revolved around the attitudes, the smugness, the genuine human and democratic (in the sense of social relationships) views of this man, particularly in the face of the trusts and of social

snobbery. Penrod's father was this same man, stereotyped. But now, this reconstructed figure is placed in the context of a new set of impressions and of a revised attitude concerning American life.

The late President Roosevelt told us in one of his speeches that the faith of America is the faith of the common man. And this common man, reflected in popular or mass-production art forms, embodies the attitudes of the man of the middle class, regardless of his particular occupation and class relationship in a particular work. *He, not the business man, is America.* Just as a residue of attitudes have been left after the collapse of the New Deal, so is there a residue which can be described as the New Deal cultural climate. This New Deal cultural climate is a consequence of the collapse of the idea that the business man is legitimately, properly, and happily the leading figure of America, the true master of destiny, the model of conduct for youth, the man on whose shoulders rests the responsibility of securing the prosperity of the American Way of Life. Fewer and fewer people believe this, and it is doubtful if many of the business men themselves even believe it. Babbitt may still be Babbitt, but he cannot sing the old tune.

The prosperity of the 1920's ended in a collapse which demonstrated conclusively that American economy could not—with all of its productive capacity—sustain an internal market which could guarantee what is called prosperity. The shadow of the next depression hangs over the entire land. More and more, the probability of another depression is taken as a fact, a fact that is often accepted almost without debate. We can, in consequence of this, see that the social conditions giving rise to the theme of the American Dream, the American Way of Life in our culture are rapidly becoming part of the past. Stage by stage, the implications, the premises, the assertions which went to compose the ideology of the American Dream have been chipped off. This is one of the facts behind the current and widespread mood of insecurity. And, consequently, it becomes one of the reasons which permit us to predict that gradually this theme is bound to be abandoned in American writing.

Early Democratic Attitudes

Time was when the treatment of the American dream in writing was less nakedly *political* than at present. Democracy was embodied, not in praise of the

system of political democracy that has been established in America, but rather, in terms of the social attitudes and social relationships of characters. In this sense, the stories of George Ade, the cartoons of the late Tad Dorgan, are illustrative. The cartoons of the boys in the back-room showed directly that they held democratic and equalitarian attitudes toward one another. The George Ade character was uncomfortable if he acted like a snob. But now this democratic feeling has to be asserted in banal political statements and speeches made by characters, and introduced into the story itself. In other words, the characters don't prove democratic social relationships by actions in a direct fashion: the author tries to prove that these exist by overt statements and speeches. At the same time, it needs to be said that in the past there was a social warrant, a social and economic prerequisite, which made plausible the success story if this be looked at merely in its own terms and on the plane of the immediate and direct action presented in these success stories of the past. That is to say, many people, relatively, had the chance of succeeding. Social and class relationships were less stratified than they are now.

The reaction to the success story in more serious and sensitive fiction, thus, was that of revealing patterns of destiny which emphasized that success didn't create inner harmony, contentment. In other words, one emphasis was that of the consequences of success. Serious writers registered the fact of negative consequences. The weakness and superficiality of the success story was not to be found so much in falseness, in the sense of emphasizing a possibility in America that was not open to a fairly proportionate section of the population: rather, its falseness lay in the shallowness of its psychology, in its substitution of stereotype for character. Today, the successful movie and fiction heroes often register a sense of guilt. They are nostalgic for the days when they were not successful. Further, a new success story is being written, the success story of the character of glamor, the entertainer, the popular artist, the jazz musician and so on. Willy nilly, new models of conduct, new types for imitation, new heroes are being created in mass production culture. These new heroes are entertainers, usually ones who come from the people, not the classes. They are common or forgotten men. This is evidence of the rust that has accumulated on the American Dream of other years.

With such tendencies apparent at the present time, we can see that whereas in the past, the American Way of Life was opening vistas to the future, it is not seen, principally, as one which constitutes a way of life that poses problems. Almost the entire nation, practically, is aware that grave and crucial problems have developed in America, and that these are, basically, economic. All of the necessary conclusions, however, have not been drawn from this awareness. Withal, there is now no mistaking the fact that a state of awareness of serious problems exists. This awareness stamps the fact that people of all classes are more conscious that something is wrong, that problems exist. As a corollary of this, it is perceived that these problems involve the future of everyone, the sense of the self which people hold of themselves, the destiny which they envisage for themselves and their children. In other words, the awareness of problems of this order is one that is now intimately related with the moods, the feelings, the intimate personal life, the psychology of people. It is such awareness which is one of the preconditions for changes in the content and themes of writing, and for changes and variation in the tastes of readers. When problems remain purely public and generalized, then the existence of these problems may have little direct relationship to tastes in reading. But when they are grasped directly, intimately by people, they will most likely begin to be revealed, expressed, stated in literature. A problem that is public in character must be translated into the terms whereby men and women realize that its existence as a problem involves their very sense of themselves. This, precisely, is what happened, and this, precisely, is one of the ways in which we can see why the American Dream is becoming a worn-out literary motif.

During the war, not only Americans, "but the entire human race, was given an education," the like of which has never been gained in the past. Conclusions have not been drawn from this education, but that does not negate the fact itself. The war beat and pressed itself into the very organisms of almost everyone. The realization that world problems exist is now one that has been translated into problems of the self, problems of personal life. With the atom bomb, it is no choice intelligent few who know that it is possible for humanity, itself, to be annihilated. Despite arguments, promises, propaganda to the contrary, Gallup Polls, shortly after the war, indi-

cated that over fifty per cent of the American population either believed or else did not exclude as a definite possibility, the onset of a Third World War, of one that will be worse than the Second. This attests to the same fact that we have already noted. Public problems are now being translated into the problem of the self.

It was the translation of public, of general problems, into those of the self which helps to explain the development of the novel in Russia in the nineteenth century. Czarist Russia was topsy turvy. The twentieth century is topsy turvy. The sense of America as being topsy turvy is growing. In this sense there now is to be seen a parallel between nineteenth-century Czarist Russia and twentieth-century America. But this parallel must be strictly limited. The topsy-turviness of Czarist Russia was based on the contradictions between feudal and capitalist relationships and this existed in a period when capitalism was expanding, and when there was confidence in the future of capitalism. Contrast the greater ease with which Europe could recover from the ravages of the Napoleonic War than it can from the two World Wars of the twentieth century, and one sees this historic change clearly. Today, we live in a topsy-turvy world which cannot expand as was the case in the nineteenth century. Capitalism was then progressive. Capitalism is now exhausting itself. It has received two mortal wounds in the form of two World Wars. It is like a beast that is slowly dying from these wounds. How long its death agony will be is unpredictable. Whether it lashes out and gathers together its last energies and snarls and bites like a wounded dying beast gone berserk before it expires, is another unpredictable matter. These general factors define the limits of our analogy with Russian literature.

Contradictory Tendencies at Work

The conditions for literary change, for a literary renaissance, are various. One of them is this awareness that historic, political, social, economic problems involves the very status and destiny of the individual self. This condition exists in America. It may serve as one of the prerequisites for a period of literary ferment and even of literary renaissance. A force that is checking this ferment and renaissance, however, is found in the fact that big business is in control of a large and most significant area of culture. A second factor that may check an American renaissance lies in the fact that,

despite cheerful words expressed in public, despair is widespread. Many literary critics, commentators, clergymen, political leaders and others have the mistaken notion that a literature of so-called negativism is a danger to an existing social system. This is incorrect. If we look at Russian literature of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, we can prove this. The writers who did the most damage to the Czarist system were those who affirmed life, if I may use the language of Van Wyck Brooks and others. Tolstoy affirmed life, and no Russian writer of his time was a greater menace to the security and even the existence of Czarism than was Leo Tolstoy.

There are few writers more likely to make rebels, even to this day, than Tolstoy.

Dostoevsky defended Czarism. He co-related the defense of Czarism with belief in God, and, correspondingly, saw revolution in atheism. Yet his major influence negates his affirmations. For he worked out the problems of belief in God, and in doing this, he created an ideal character, Aloysha Karamazov. When we read *The Brothers Karamazov*, many of us work through this problem anew, and we do not conclude that we will emulate Aloysha, that we will try to be like him, and that if we do, we can save our own selves. Dostoevsky, defender of the Czarist system, was really a danger to that system. But contrast these two writers with Artzbashieff, their literary inferior and a man who came after them. His work is morally nihilistic: *Sanine* had a widespread but relatively transitory influence.

Whereas Tolstoy and Dostoevsky worked out central problems of the self in literature, Artzbashieff popularized facile despair, facile and at least semi-hooliganized Nietzscheanism. If one seriously imitated Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, one would more seriously explore, more seriously try to harmonize ideals and action: doing this, one would actually be in a position concretely and intimately to test their affirmations, to know by the very tensions and play of impulse in oneself whether or not these worked. Imitating Artzbashieff's *Sanine*, one runs away from oneself: one substitutes a facile immoralism for a moral seriousness. Moral nihilism does not endanger a crumbling social system in the way that moral seriousness does. Cynics and moral nihilists perform the role of safety valves. The moral nihilist, in emphasizing hopelessness and cynicism, thereby implies the lesson that there is no future worth

fighting for. And those who attack a social system at its foundation are men who firmly believe that there is a future worth fighting for, and with this, that life is worth passing on. In this sense, they are morally serious. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy confirm and strengthen an attitude of moral seriousness in readers; Artzbashieff doesn't. Further, this difference is most important for young readers. They, above all others, can learn these lessons from literature. If the guardians of what is called order and property in this world care for advice from this critic, I willingly give it to them. I advise them to tell the youth, especially the serious youth, to read writers like Artzbashieff, not ones like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

Various newspapers, publicists and others are fighting post-war disillusionment by denying it, by condemning it. But the simple fact is that it is here. We now live in the era of post-war disillusionment. An era of widespread mass disillusionment proves that you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. The most common demonstration to validate the assertion that the people cannot always be fooled can easily be observed—in periods of widespread disillusionment. Before masses of people prove that they cannot be always fooled by taking the road of social revolution, they will often display apathy, disillusionment. They show that they are not fooled in the realm of immediate and practical life, but in broadened political and cultural areas. Personal life affords everyone the immediate and concrete basis for empirically testing the values that are generalized in culture. When the workers are told that the capitalists can guarantee them jobs and a high standard of living, and the capitalists fail to fulfill their guarantee, they begin to disbelieve. They are not fooled by this promise. A new promise, a new guarantee, may fool them, but the old one will not. When women are told that it is murder to practice contraception, and when they experience dangerous and debilitating consequences after acting on this moral instruction, they, also, draw conclusions. When Catholic daughters, for instance, see what it has meant for their mothers to be child-bearing animals, they often draw the conclusion of practicing birth control.

Endless illustrations of this simple truism could be elaborated. Here, we need, mainly, to apply it to the assumptions of the American Dream, to the eulogistic conceptions of the American Way of Life. When motion picture and

mass-production stories continuously present the same fables to masses of people, they feed their revery, de-energize their moral nerves. But at the same time, they show these people what they do not have. Over and over again, the trial of values of American capitalist society is imaginatively made in this popular art. It can confirm these values only temporarily. It can induce only passing belief. For depression, the opportunity for freer sexual relationships, the many-sided possibilities of life, the many-sided frustrations of people all tend to negate the implications of these films and stories. Social, political conclusions are not necessarily drawn as a consequence. But personal conclusions are. And through this process of acceptance and rejection in private life, the movie makers, the hack writers, the magazine editors and others are providing the American people with concrete material that permits them to evaluate the success or failure of the so-called American Way of Life. Just as children gradually come to understand that neither Santa Claus nor the Big Bad Wolf exists, so do adults come to understand that other kinds of fairy tales are—fairy tales.

It is this conclusion which again leads me to offer advice to all of American reaction, advice which I doubt that they will take. My advice to them is to encourage an art and a literature of moral nihilism. Moral nihilism is their major barrier to the drawing of conclusions in the present era. What is now a major danger to them is an art of moral seriousness. The masters of our destiny, politically, economically, and theologically, have all issued promissory notes: they lack the moral, the political capital to pay on the line on these notes. Their failure is now stamped and almost dated by the great scientific discovery in human history, the capture of atomic energy. Those who say that only America could have produced the atomic bomb in this period are correct. Capitalistic America—as the fact proves—alone could do this. But in having done this, capitalistic America has demonstrated that it cannot solve problems for itself, let alone for all humanity. The man from Independence, Missouri, sits in the White House, in no enviable position. When he was to become President of these United States as a consequence of the death of the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, he is reported to have declared that he felt as though he had been hit by the moon and the stars. He was hit by some-

thing as terrible: he was hit by the problems of this period.

Many years ago, a man from the border states, a man from Kentucky, a man of the people, sat where he now sits. That man possessed the will, the humanity, the greatness to—regardless of all else—organize a war so that a problem would be solved, however terribly. History has changed, or as we are told, Time Marches On. His successor, the man from Missouri, can solve nothing. His impasse is focused in his atom bomb policy. If he reveals the alleged secrets, or if he doesn't, the same problem remains. Neither secrecy nor openness will guarantee us, or our children, from war and possibly, annihilation. The atom bomb focuses sharply, dramatically, and in a manner which can press terror into every human being, the problems of the present. Now, the world crisis is not a generalized crisis merely to be talked about in newspapers and books. Now, it is not merely a problem for the leaders, the masters of destiny. Now, as never before, it has been, it is being translated into the intimate consciousness of almost every adult human being on the face of this planet. This has profound, and not fully predictable, consequences for literature. These consequences can be stated, to repeat, by the remark that now there is a wide special awareness that the problems of the world at large involve every aspect of the very life of individual human beings. It is a realization of this that produces the frantic formula—modern man is obsolete. The correct statement is that contemporary ideology is obsolete. Art, in affirming this ideology, is bound, in the long run to drive home more forcibly the fact of this obsolescence. Culture pressed into the service of this obsolescence cannot succeed. It must call on the aid of the policeman for a relative success.

American literature, in this period of continuing crisis, will develop—how? The real answer to this question will be written by the new generations. And we can suggest, repeating in conclusion, that this answer will be of one kind or another depending on whether or not we have moral nihilism or moral seriousness. In this way, the moral question, so frequently discussed, is really involved in the literary situation. The critics who speak in generalized moral affirmation have done a disservice to their country. They have created the wrong kind of confusion. The cultural defense of the status quo demands now, not a continuation of the old fables of health and hap-

piness and love: it demands not a belief in God in a vacuum. It demands despair that will be channeled into personal, into personally self-destructive actions and attitudes. It demands not the rose-colored falseness of hope, but rather, the compensatory and consoling self-flattery of personal cynicism, of personal disillusionment. For this dissipates those feel-

ings of alarm, of urgency, of growing and insistent demand for change which turns personal disillusionments into social and political deeds. This, then, is the general setting for the problems which the new and young writer, the next generation of intellectuals face as they begin to function. This, further, I believe, suggests the nature of the problems involved in

the analysis of the content of contemporary American culture. This, briefly, outlines certain of the significant aspects of contemporary cultural problems. To give answers to these problems, to chart a new course is a present task, a task which rests mainly on younger generations.

JAMES T. FARRELL.

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Setting the Record Straight

Readers of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL fall, if we may classify them, into one of four categories: those who read it and agree with its point of view; those who read it and disagree with its point of view; those who read it and misrepresent its point of view; and those who refuse to read beyond the cover page in order that they may attack its point of view unmolested by a knowledge of its contents.

This otherwise uninteresting commonplace is prompted by an article in the August, 1946, issue of *Workers' International News*, the theoretical organ of the Revolutionary Communist Party, British Section of the Fourth International. It is written by E. Grant as a polemic against the French comrade Pierre Frank on the question of Bonapartism and democracy in Europe today. Grant, it is said, is the theoretical leader of the Trotskyist movement in Britain. With the main points in the polemic, we are not momentarily concerned. But in the course of it, Grant polishes off a jewel of such glittering irony that it deserves, we think, to be rescued from obscurity. He writes:

The existence of Bonapartist measures does not make a régime Bonapartist either, Comrade Frank! This argument is about as profound as those of the "bureaucratic collectivists" who argued that we had the intervention of the state in economy under Hitler, in France under Blum, in America under Roosevelt (NRA), in Russia under Stalin...consequently all those régimes were the same.

What is right is right as everyone will agree. Why then should there be disagreement over what to call that which is wrong, ignorant or stupid? By "bureaucratic collectivists" Grant can but have in mind the comrades of the Workers Party and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL who have put forward and defended the theory that Stalinist Russia represents what we call a "bureaucratic-collectivist state." This theory has been

presented, especially in the pages of this review, in numerous articles published over the past few years and, good, bad or indifferent, nobody can rightfully claim that our theory is anything but what we have repeatedly said it is.

According to Grant, the "bureaucratic collectivists" "argue" (where they do this arguing remains a secret not only to us but also to Grant) that the Roosevelt, Hitler, Blum and Stalin régimes are all the same; but, again according to Grant—and this time with a sarcasm guaranteed, as the English say, to hit us for six—this argument is not very profound.

As the not-very-profound and very-much-ridiculed "bureaucratic-collectivists," we promptly re-read every article on the subject that has appeared in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, including its overseas edition. Naturally, we found nothing that resembles Grant's description of our position, but we were recompensed in the search by finding quite the contrary.

As is known at least among the readers who fall into either of the first two categories we listed, we have repeatedly polemicized *against* those who hold that the social régimes of Hitlerite Germany (when it existed) and Stalinist Russia are the same. They know that the Workers Party and THE NEW INTERNATIONAL have always criticized and rejected the point of view that fascist capitalism (Hitlerite Germany or Mussolini Italy) is the same thing as Stalinist collectivism, whether it is put forward, in one form, by anti-Marxists like Burnham and MacDonald or, in another form, by such comrades in the Marxist camp as J. R. Johnson. The *political* régimes of Roosevelt and Blum we have called bourgeois democracy; the political régimes of Hitler and Stalin we have called, in common with all Marxists, totalitarian despotisms. The *social* régimes of Roosevelt,

Blum and Hitler we have called capitalist; the social régime of Stalin we have called not only anti-socialist and anti-working-class, but also anti-capitalist, that is, bureaucratic-collectivist.

To those, especially Marxists, who have insisted that both the Hitlerite and Stalinist régimes are capitalist we have said, in our more indulgent discussions: If your view is granted for a moment, will you at least acknowledge that your Russian "capitalism" is entirely different in its historical origins from any capitalism we ever knew; that your Russian "capitalism" does not operate in accordance with all the laws familiar to us in the "rest" of the capitalist world; that your Russian "capitalist class" is unlike any other capitalist class we know or have ever known; that there is no capitalist class in the world that shows any sign of wanting to establish the kind of "capitalism" that exists in Russia, whereas whole sections of the capitalist class everywhere are openly or covertly working to establish the fascist capitalist régime of the Hitler type, and decaying capitalist society itself is moving in that direction; that the political representatives of the Russian type of "capitalism" do not receive the support of the capitalist class in the known capitalist world, and that capitalism has nowhere produced a native national political party or movement that aims to establish outside of Russia the same régime that exists inside of Russia; that the "peculiar" form that "capitalism" takes in Russia rules it out as the form that will develop normally (as, for example, fascism does in the decaying capitalist states) in the known capitalist world; that, therefore, Stalinist "capitalism" is and will remain (so long as it continues to exist) uniquely Russian; that to call the Stalinist state "capitalist" requires a radical change in the definition of capitalist society that

was held in common by all Marxists, Marx included, for a century; that you can call Russia "capitalist" to your heart's content—for even that is better than calling this reactionary Stalinist monstrosity a workers' state of *any* kind—but at least admit that there never was, is not and in all likelihood never will be

another "capitalist" state like it; and so on and so on and so forth.

Thus and similarly is how the "bureaucratic-collectivists" have argued and still do. Knowing this, what shall we say about the sentence quoted from E. Grant? If we were vulgar and blunt, we would say: What the hell has happened

in our Fourth International to respect for theoretical discussion and to scrupulousness in criticism and polemic? But we are not vulgarians. We are courteous and tactful people. So we ask instead: Into what category of readers of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL does E. Grant fall?
M. S.

Kravchenko — Product of the Stalinist Era

Kravchenko's book,* subtitled "The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official," has become shrouded by political sensationalism, but this does not negate its intrinsic and objective values as a description of Stalinist Russia, and its monstrous dictatorship. The book must be approached cautiously, but not in such a skeptical spirit as to toss away its definite merits.

It is useless and unnecessary to become embroiled in the dispute regarding the personality of Kravchenko, or to attempt any subjective appraisal of his character. That is, at best, of secondary importance and a subject on which one man's opinion is as good, or valueless, as another's. Suffice it to indicate that the American Stalinist machine, in its panicky attempt to discredit the author, has dwelled exclusively upon his personality, without attempting to seriously refute the damning picture of their "socialist homeland" drawn by Kravchenko.

The author himself, although casting an obviously idealized and self-ennobling image of himself throughout the book, nevertheless does not conceal the basic facts regarding himself and his former status in Stalin's Russia. In fact, this is essential for the descriptive purposes of the book. Kravchenko came from a family of vaguely humanitarian, non-party revolutionists. His father, who instilled a certain socialist romanticism in the son, seems to have been a semi-intellectual Russian whose historic grasp was exhausted by the 1905 Revolution. Maturing in the early years of the October Revolution, but apparently without any flair for Marxist politics and study, the young Kravchenko was swept up into the ranks of the young Comsomols and Party members whose ardor and enthusiasm were expressed particularly during the First Five Year Plan. The sincerity

and faith of the young Kravchenko are unquestionable, as is his political ignorance and lack of background.

Kravchenko's Background

As a political thinker or theoretician Kravchenko, of course, has nothing to offer us. His present acceptance of the dogmas of American liberalism and the theories of Russian capitalist restorationists is but the reverse coin of his youthfully simple acceptance of the Stalinist "we-are-building-socialism" line. To exchange the sinister Stalin-GPU bureaucracy for the liberal-capitalist ideologists is, perhaps, a moral progression, but hardly a political one. But we know of no book that offers so much to the reader in terms of a detailed description of how the damned and bloody machine of Stalin operates, from its highest to its lowest summits.

Kravchenko was in the Party; he participated in the forced collectivization; the violent strains of industrialization; the sweeping purges of Stalin's unilateral civil war to exterminate his opponents; the mobilization of the nation for the German war, etc. Kravchenko participated in the epoch of the Revolution's ebb-tide and final counter-revolutionary overthrow. He was in on all levels—as a young Comsomol sent to tame the resistant peasantry; as an industrial engineer; as a Party man, etc. He knows Stalin's Russia as few do who have lived through it, or escaped from it.

The value of his tale does not lie in the more general and "theoretical" aspects of these sweeping events that the author attempts to picture for us. Rarely do his generalizations rise above the level of sloganeering, simplification and downright petty gossip filled with implied naive moralizing. Kravchenko's real merit is in his simple, effective and down-to-earth descriptions of what these events meant in terms of the Russian masses. He takes us to the village during

the forced collectivization; he escorts us through NKVD prison-labor camps; he talks to factory proletarians in the shops he is managing; he brings us to a unit meeting of the ruling Party during the purges; he makes us participate in his "interviews" with the NKVD, to see and feel its cruel, crude-handed methods; he advances us to the rank and office of a high government official in the Kremlin; we become a member of the bureaucracy overseas, etc.

In other words, we see and learn, in minute detail, how the whole gigantic machine operates. Thus, the book offers a valuable supplement to the great theoretic works of Comrade Trotsky and others on the Soviet Revolution and the process of its degeneration. The descriptive details that Trotsky and other political theoreticians necessarily could not provide to bolster up their work is provided—and over provided—by Kravchenko.

The book has another merit, perhaps of greater importance than its eloquent descriptions. That is the story of the Russian people and their attitude toward the régime. The familiar and nauseating story, so widespread among American liberals and Russian fellow-travelers, would have us believe that dictatorial, "strong" régimes are a natural, acceptable and essential system in Russia, peculiar to the historic nature of the people and justified by all of Russian history. "The Russians had the Czar for centuries; now they have a strong and successful government that has built up the nation." Kravchenko's book, in its description of the popular attitude toward Stalin (The Bossman) and the new *barii* (Masters), is a stinging refutation of this sinister totalitarian apologism. It is this aspect of the book that the American Stalinists have found most irksome. They have not answered it with a single argument, of course. The simple question of why the beloved régime and its

* *I Chose Freedom*, by Victor Kravchenko. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1946; 496 pages.

exalted ruler require a NKVD secret police force numbering a million or more, this simple question is conveniently lost amid the lengthy attacks on the author's personality.

For, as Kravchenko shows us time after time, the truth is that the Russian masses—the workers and peasants of the country—groan and strain endlessly under the alplike weight of history's tyranny of tyrannies. To think otherwise is an insult to the sufferings of these people, and a flat denial of a history rich in dramatic struggles for democratic advancement and freedom. In episode after episode in his book, Kravchenko reveals to us the true feelings of the Russian worker, the Russian peasant and even the minor functionaries and bureaucrats within the régime's institutions. Kravchenko does not color the remarks or reactions, most of which are today couched in terms of apathy, despair and helplessness. This lends them an authentic ring, because nobody knows better than the Russian people the task involved in overthrowing the bureaucratic collectivist tyranny. Yet it is clear that the régime is widely hated and despised, that the "system" causes aversion and disgust, that vague, ill-defined conceptions of genuine socialist democracy prevails among the workers and intellectuals, that the Russian revolutionary tradition is far from extinguished.

Although the end of Stalinism is not in sight, it is just as sure that a favorable turning of historic circumstances will find a responsive movement among the masses of Russia. These people are neither the docile slaves of a neo-Czarism, as our American liberals would have us believe; nor are they the dehumanized, barbarized cogs of a neo-Totalitarian order, as our professional anti-Stalinists and *Politics* authors would like us to accept. Behind the precision-functioning, Kafkaian machine are the restless Russian people. And this revelation is, I believe, the most valuable side of the Kravchenko book.

A word on Kravchenko, the author. Despite the fictionalized self-portrait of himself (alleged to have been drawn with the assistance of Eugene Lyons), Kravchenko is a true product of the new ruling, bureaucratic class of Stalinist Russia. His ideology is that of a benevolent bureaucrat repelled by the vile excesses of the régime. Knowing nothing of politics, Marxism or the international labor movement, his ideas are neither clear nor well expressed. But why should we expect him to be either a socialist or

a bourgeois liberal? His portrait of Russia is, in this sense, a self-portrait. Kravchenko remains an ardent Russian nationalist, with no ties whatever to internationalism. When he discusses America, he does not even mention its labor movement. What impressed him in America is (a) the high material living standards; and (b) the freedom enjoyed by factory managers and engineers in the actual operation of their factories and plants. Kravchenko hates Stalin because The Boss' Police-State does not operate in similar fashion—that is, permit the practice of Kravchenko's humanitarian paternalism toward his workers. Kravchenko is a bureaucrat, a benevolent one to be sure, but workers' democratic control of production is as foreign to him as it is to Stalin.

How Did It Happen?

Finally, a word on the review of this book by Ralph Graham, published in the August, 1946, *Fourth International*. This reviewer, blithely ignoring the staring question that *he* must contemplate and reply to after reading the book—namely, how can one speak of Russia's working class as a *ruling* class and Russia as a workers' state—demands to know how theoretical "innovators" can "explain the unique phenomenon of a 'ruling class' which cowers in fear and terror before the political instrument of its own rule."

Evidently, for Graham, the outstanding characteristic of a ruling class is its harmony, homogeneity and stability. He has never heard of strata, layers, sections, splits, divisions, etc., *within* a ruling class; nor of intense and sometimes violent rivalry between its different divisions! Perhaps he has never heard of, for example, the Spanish Civil War where the division within the *same* ruling class proved so deep and impossible of resolution that a bloody civil war raged for two and a half years; or of the purges conducted by the German Gestapo within the ruling ranks of German capitalism. Kravchenko represents one section of the new ruling bureaucracy—the liberal "civilized" wing of engineers and managers whose main enemy is the GPU, the modern NKVD. It is the section most resentful of Stalin and his top political clique, symbol of the perpetually interfering State. Allowing for the historic and material differences, one can draw a legitimate analogy between Kravchenko and his friends, opposing the Stalinist state bureaucracy, and the important section of the American rul-

ing class that opposed the Roosevelt "New Deal" bureaucracy and its intervention. Naturally, the conditions of Russia (isolation, poverty, low level of productivity and culture, etc.) have tempered the nature of the new ruling class and alone account for its extreme centralization, suspicion, brutality and general stupidity.

If Graham rejects our theory of the new Russian ruling class, from which has stemmed the dissident ruler—bureaucrat Kravchenko, then how can he explain the fact that Kravchenko proposes neither the restoration of capitalism in Russia, nor a social revolution of the proletariat to restore the original Workers' State? Will Graham reply that Kravchenko is merely a disappointed member of the bureaucratic caste, as the Stalinists claim? In a word, how does he explain Kravchenko and his break with the régime?

HENRY JUDD.

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The Significance of Koestler

An Exchange of Opinion

Editors:

In an article devoted to a discussion of Koestler's books which appeared in the August 1945 issue of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, Peter Loumos expressed a point of view which, I believe, is worth further study and analysis.

The striking of easy attitudes and simplistic rejections appear, more often than not, in the "Marxist" reviews and it seems to me that the world (the proper world, the world of which the book speaks) is ignored for arguments created out of slogans, for what may be called, for lack of a better term, theological thumpings.

Let's took a look at the Koestler review. We start off with a discussion of *Darkness at Noon* and we get an account of who Rubashov was—Old Bolshevik, Civil War hero, party leader at home and abroad, etc., and after we trace the story of his capitulation, which could have been the capitulation of any of those who were actually tried and shot, we find that

"...the curtain falls on Rubashov and the story is told; but this is a story that is more insidious in what it implies than in what it tells. It tells of Rubashov's capitulation to Stalin... He had to be an individual whose deviations were not organized, whose opposition was tactical and not principled and who felt there was still Bolshevik vitality in the régime. To this character, Koestler grafts an imposing façade. Rubashov says:

"The old guard is dead. We are the last. We are told that the first chairman of the International had also been executed as a 'traitor.' Rubashov speaks with sympathy for the masses. Rubashov was an 'Old Bolshevik,' a 'hero' in the Civil War. In short, this party wheelhorse, part and parcel of the old régime, is held out by Koestler and accepted by most readers as an inflexible old revolutionary." (My italics—N. W.)

I must apologize for the long quotation; but the transformation of Rubashov effected by Loumos is really much more remarkable than anything we find in Koestler.

What is "insidious"? According to Loumos, Koestler's Rubashov is passed off as an "inflexible revolutionary." Really, that is too much. If *Darkness at Noon* sheds any light it is precisely on this question: the question of the flexible backbone of the capitulators, the waverings, the oscillations between firm stance and capitulation (as if firm stance had a chance to survive in the steady brutal stream of totalitarian pressure) and, of course, more than that, it showed how the moral fiber of the Old Bolsheviks had been so corroded by adaptation to the Stalin régime that the trials struck it only a decisive final tap, all it needed to come tumbling down. If Rubashov does come through as a figure of "an inflexible old revolutionary," then darkness is transformed into noon and noon is simply the

skating of happy idiots on the surface of the sunny sea.

But how does Loumos "get" this conclusion from Koestler's book? Let's see if we can find out (though his motivations and ratiocinations may be as obscure and difficult as those of the Old Bolsheviks.)

Basis of Rubashov's Opposition

Is it because the opposition of Rubashov is only "tactical, not principled"? Leaving aside for a moment the question as to how this non-principled opponent of Stalin is disqualified from principledness almost by definition, as it were, we ask ourselves if by "tactical" Loumos is making the point that tactics are subordinate to strategy. In this case, being a Stalinist, Rubashov might oppose this or that tactic of the régime but go along on the basic Stalinist strategy of "socialism in one country" and all that implies; or that he is merely guilty of "mentally rebelling" against the régime, suffering pangs of conscience and a severe toothache every time he threw a comrade or a friend on the fire.

In either case, he apparently was not a principled opponent of the régime. Of course not. If he were, there would be no story; certainly not the story that was written in *Darkness at Noon*, which attempts to tell us, through the symbolic and collective figure of Rubashov, the disintegration and final crack-up of the Bolshevik "Old Guard," who adapted themselves to the bureaucratic strangulation of their revolution and therefore, it seems, of themselves.

If Loumos is telling us that this is not the story of the principled opponents of the Stalin régime, the heroic and almost superhuman story of Leon Trotsky and his comrades who, with the weapons of analysis and the best traditions of the revolutionary movement, stood up straight in the midst of the terrific pressure and called the turn time and time again until their mouths were stopped, then he is saying something which, no doubt, is true and though not totally irrelevant, is a fact of the second order to be introduced on the side or at the end or wherever you want, except as a basic analysis and understanding of the book that was written. Some day when the other story is written, someone will arise and say that it does not deal with those who *did* capitulate and throw us in a similar state of confusion.

The Scope of the Book

Anyway, what we really should do is first understand how far the book's frame of reference extends and then restrict most of our critical activity within that frame. That would be much more to the point, and then, if we all behaved well along those lines, we might be licensed to take a plunge outside that frame. If the book is an im-

aginative attempt to disinter the souls of the Old Bolsheviks and find out what went on therein, well that's really what it is, that's its sphere, its reference, its subject and that's certainly subject enough. To demand what would amount to a "Trotskyist happy ending," that is, to demand a portrayal of a principled opponent of the Stalin régime and then, failing to find one in the story of Rubashov, the capitulator, to shout that Koestler is a fakir (sleight of hand) and an "apologist" for the régime and Koestler's Rubashov is "palmed off" for a real revolutionist because the real article is missing, is to be guilty of the same vulgar tendentiousness which distinguishes the literary chiefs of the Stalinist tribe.

I don't mean that the story of such a principled opponent is unimportant or worthless, quite the contrary; but that the book *Darkness at Noon* deals with the "story" of the capitulation of the Old Bolsheviks, the creation of the frame of mind and spirit which made such monstrous confessions possible, and how well that is accomplished or not accomplished is task enough for the insight of the reviewer.

So, still in the pursuit of the "inflexible old revolutionary" Loumos has created out of Koestler's character, we can pause for a moment, catch our breath and then sing out: "No, he's not in there." The fact that he is merely a tactical and episodic opponent of the bureaucratic régime, constantly digesting his conscience, his mind, his traditions, his friends and then throwing them up all over again when his teeth start to ache... no, that is hardly our inflexible old chap... we shall have to seek him elsewhere.

II.

It must be apt to study and praise elements that for fullness of spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere may be maleficent—Matthew Arnold.

For a purposeful discussion of *The Yogi and the Commissar* it might help us somewhat to take the advice of the Yogi and relax for a moment and pretend we are no longer being bombarded by the stimuli of the "external" world. In the state of such relaxation, breathing just as the Yogi tells us to do, we can still our immediate and reflexive responses, hold them in a state of suspense and permit exposure before the mental plates of another idea affixed to our idea, or perhaps our idea in combination with others.

In *The Yogi and the Commissar*, Koestler advances a central idea which must not be considered on the basis of its efficacy as a substitute for Marxism, in which case it is to be rejected out of hand, but, disregarding his extravagant claims, erect a particular frame of reference, which we can do ourselves, in order to consider it properly.

What is the idea? Well, here at random

is a sample of it: "the Second and Third Internationals got into the blind alley because they fought capitalism on its own terms of reference, and were unable to ascend to that spiritual climate the longing for which we feel in our bones." Absurd, isn't it? Of course. But let's try to approach the idea warily, from behind, as it were, and see if we can catch it and make it perform for us.

What does Koestler mean? Well, here's more.

"Thus, while in the material sphere the cumulative effect of Left attempts was a slow and steady improvement of social conditions, its cumulative effect in the psychological sphere was a growing frustration and disillusionment. There was nothing to replace the lost absolute faith, the belief in a higher reality, in a fixed system of values. Progress is a shallow myth because its roots are not in the past but in the future. The Left became emotionally more and more rootless. The sap was drying up. At the time when British Labor and the German Social Democrats came to power, all vitality had already run out of them. The communications with the unconscious layers were cut; their ethos was based on purely rational concepts; the only reminder of the French revolutionary tradition was the caustic Voltairian tone of the polemics.

"At a Communist writers' congress, after speeches about the brave new world in construction, André Malraux asked impatiently: 'And what about the man who is run over by a tram car?' He met blank stares and did not insist. But there is a voice inside us which does insist. We have been cut off from the belief in personal survival... to be killed on a barricade or to die a martyr to science provide some compensation, but what about the man who is run over by the tram car? Gothic man had an answer to this question. The apparently accidental was part of a higher design... you were looked after in higher quarters... but the only answer which Malraux, after a painful silence, received was: 'in a perfect socialist transport system there would be no accidents.'

Now, in order to consider the above ideas, it is not necessary to consider them from the point of view of adoption or rejection, that is *programmatic* adoption or rejection. It is not likely that Koestler offers us a new world of politics, but it is possible and even fruitful to consider his point of view as having a relevance and a meaning for those who practice politics.

What Koestler has reference to is "an error which lies hidden in the materialist and rationalist psychology of the Left." What that error is, no one has clearly stated. As a matter of fact, embarrassment has usually interceded before anyone could get it off his chest. It was often a protest against the point of view that individual man was of little consequence, slogans are formulated to move masses of men in the same way that the proper distance between fulcrum and lever is ascertained. The mechanizing and brutalizing effects of the present order are naturally carried over into the orders and organization of those who wish to destroy it.

For example, consider our failures. The capitulation of the Social Democracy had been prepared long in advance. Luxemburg saw it. When it came in final and dramatic form it was an act which climaxed the long period of adaptation to the bourgeois world.

The spiritual and physical history of Stalinism is well known and though it, because of its loud and powerful organization, represents "orthodox and de facto" Marxism, we have the Socialist Workers Party leaping alongside, a pitiful and intolerant Stalinist mime, combining the "truths" of Trotskyism with the organizational practices of the Renaissance genius in the Kremlin.

Of course, we have our materialist, historical and even dialectic-materialist explanations of these phenomena. The Social Democracy was wedded fast to the capitalist expansion which collided with the ends of the earth in 1914 and precipitated the First World War. Stalinism is the product of the historical conjunction of a successful proletarian revolution in a backward country and unsuccessful proletarian revolutions in advanced countries. "Cannonism"... well, that is a queer duck, essentially the product of the INFLUENCE of Stalinism (though most of us agree that there is sufficient political agreement between the WP and SWP for fusion of the two parties, we also believe that, left to its own peculiar devices, despite a political program that is similar to ours, they will never be able to discharge successfully the responsibilities of a revolutionary party).

It is becoming evident that a more or less correct political "orientation" and objective analysis, though indispensable, are not quite enough; and perhaps it is here that the "moral" criticism of a Koestler is useful.

The conversion of Stalinist functionaries into fire-snorting revolutionists and of revolutionists into functionaries is a wearisome process. We see it every time the Stalinists execute an about-face.

It isn't correct to state that Koestler is a left-wing apologist for Stalinism. It isn't correct to state that Koestler's character "Rubashov" is palmed off as an inflexible old revolutionary. It certainly isn't necessary to flourish the sword of materialism militant and shout with Loumos: "that the contemplation of the 'inner man' is but a short step removed from the contemplation of the navel."

Such an attitude is all that is necessary for breeding a race of heel-clicking, hard-headed, hopped-up "Marxist" monsters who will anoint themselves sole custodians of the ideas of socialism and as they absent-mindedly descend the few steps into the nightmare of atomic destruction, along with the rest of the ordinary mortals, they will carefully preserve these ideas from mass infection by planting their feet firmly in the face of anyone who tries to get near them.

NEIL WEISS.

Dear Editor:

In his letter, Neil Weiss remarks on the manner in which Arthur Koestler's books have been reviewed in THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.

Weiss is essentially correct when he charges that Marxist reviewers are prone often to "strike easy attitudes" and indulge in "theological tub thumping." For, as sometimes happens, a review which merely indicates that the author is not a revolutionary—a fact which any moderately intelligent person already knows—is of little value. He is further correct when he accuses Peter Loumos, who reviewed Koestler's books in the NI for August 1945, of succumbing to the fallacy of condemning Koestler because the main character of *Darkness at Noon*, Rubashov, is portrayed as a vacillating bureaucrat who capitulates to Stalinism rather than as an intransigent oppositionist. Loumos condemned Koestler for not writing a novel which Koestler never intended to write.

But I cannot agree with Weiss when he quotes with approval from *Yogi and the Commissar* where Koestler attributes the failures of the Second and Third Internationals to their inability "to ascend to that spiritual climate the longing for which we feel in our bones." And further from Koestler that "the Left became emotionally more and more rootless..." The communications with the unconscious layers were cut; their ethos was based on purely rational concepts..." Weiss sees in this a "protest against the point of view that the individual man was of little consequence..."

Now with the nature of Weiss' protest *per se* I have considerable sympathy, but I submit that it is irrelevant to the context of Koestler's essays. These pieces occupy an ambiguous position: they are neither topical novels, such as *Darkness at Noon*, nor directly political essays; they are a kind of *politics-in-metaphor*. This method is highly dangerous, especially in the hands of as skillful a journalist as Koestler: the glitter of his metaphors often veils some very shoddy thinking. Politics is concerned with ideas and programs; even when it deals with such seemingly "irrational" matters as mass psychology, it attempts to control them by means of rational understanding. This is not to say that politics should not be viewed in its encasements of passion and emotion; any idea which can attract men to act and sacrifice for it will accrue emotional charges. But politics has a rational basis nonetheless; it is part of a meaningful struggle; and the goal of a political analyst should be to puncture the rhetorical, ideological and emotional skins in order to reach the heart of the meaning of political struggle.

What then is the value of Koestler's comments on the failure of the Second and Third Internationals? Next to none, I think. Had he first engaged in a scientific analysis of their failures, such as Marxists have offered, and then cited his psychological characterizations, that might have been illuminating. Of course the Social Democracy, having abandoned the end of socialism, had to resort to means that were dried up, rootless, uninspiring. But what is of first importance is the causal sequence: Koestler abandons the attempt to analyze politics with methodological rigor in favor of a brilliant but inadequate literary impressionism. Weiss should not follow him along that path.

The Problem Posed by Koestler

Yet Koestler remains with us. We feel that he has not yet been completely disposed of, that a "definitive" reply to him has not yet been written. We answer his generally incorrect impressions with our generally correct formulas, but we still are not thoroughly satisfied.

Why is Koestler so exciting to read even when we disagree with his every word? Why can he raise us to a pitch of tenseness such as no other contemporary can, except perhaps Silone? Because he is skillful? Yes, but there must be something more. It is because he is so painfully *relevant to this world*. Totally without any system of ideas—which is one reason why he is such an irresponsible and undisciplined thinker—he is unparalleled in his ability, which amounts almost to an uncanny instinct, to *touch the heart of the modern problem*. More so than any other contemporary novelist, he writes with the crushing consciousness of being part of the generation of the left which has suffered the victory of fascism, the defeats of the proletariat and above all the triumph of Stalinism. He cannot adequately state this "modern problem" as a coherent political proposition; he certainly cannot suggest an adequate solution; but he can *touch* it with all the devices a skillful novelist-journalist has at his command.

And what is this modern problem, at least in its political dress? It is partly the fact that the world is no longer as simple as it was 25 years ago, despite all those in the revolutionary movement whose minds still function as if it were 1920. The perplexing phenomenon of Stalinism—a mass

movement which utilizes the devices, slogans, traditions, methods and human aspirations of the revolutionary movement in a counter-revolutionary totalitarian cause—has resulted in a complex of political, semi-political and personal problems which has resulted in the revival of philosophical anarchism, the rise of religious and mystical philosophies, the "new failure of nerve" etc.

It is this "modern problem" which Koestler so remarkably succeeds in touching; it is this which gives him his unequalled relevance. Take for instance his title essay, *The Yogi and the Commissar*. If the two alternative types are considered literally, they are absurd. Is the choice in this world really that between Gerald Heard, the Yogi, and Vyshinsky, the Commissar? But suppose you think of his Yogi-Commissar dichotomy as a "dramatic representation" of a major problem of our time: how to reconcile the inevitable trends towards economic centralization with our desire to preserve individual rights and private liberties within that centrifugal movement. Or take his novel, *Arrival and Departure*. It is an extremely irresponsible manipulation of Freudian concepts: the absurd idea that proving the motive forces of a revolutionist's alienation from society to be a childhood trauma, is some kind of relevant comment on the significance of his political behaviour. But if we do not indulge in the gross error of judging a novel merely by political standards and instead recognize that Koestler has here come up against the important problem of the conflict of the revolutionist with his "original" environment (family, authority, emotional ties, etc.); then must we not admit that

Koestler—for all his superficiality and inaccuracy—has at least done us the service of directing our attention to a significant problem? That he cannot "solve" this problem is of only secondary interest.

Koestler dwells in an ambiguous twilight zone: he is neither a novelist of dimension and density (all of his books are merely dialectical exercises in *idea-moods*); and he is not a scientific political analyst. His great value however is that he gravitates almost irresistibly towards the relevant problems of our time. We should not grant him any degree of irresponsibility when he writes about *political ideas*: when he tries to explain the reasons for the degeneration of the Third International. I, unlike Weiss, have no patience with his impressionistic metaphors which he substitutes for rigorous historical and logical analysis. But, together with Weiss, I recognize that *there is more than one universe of discourse in human existence: politics is not the totality of life*. And the impressionism which I find intolerable in political analysis, does have value in the novel or informal essay; it does, on a *different plane of communication*, provoke insights and touch sensitive areas of existence, which can be of subsequent help to political analysis.

This may seem cryptic to some people, especially to those who find nothing more unfamiliar than familiar ideas expressed in unfamiliar language. For I think that all I have done here is to indicate what should be familiar distinctions between various modes of human expression.

—IRVING HOWE.

The Timetable for Revolution

Is It Possible to Fix a Definite Date for A Counter-Revolution or a Revolution?

The following article first appeared in English in *The Labour Monthly*, London, January, 1924.—Editors.

"Of course it is not possible. It is only trains which start at certain times, and even they don't always..."

Exactitude of thought is necessary everywhere, and in questions of revolutionary strategy more than anywhere else. But as revolutions do not occur so very often, revolutionary conceptions and thought processes become slipshod, their outlines become vague, the questions are raised and solved somehow.

Mussolini brought off his "revolution" (that is, his counter-revolution) at a definitely fixed time made known publicly beforehand. He was able to do this successfully because the Socialists had not accomplished the revolution at the right time. The Bulgarian Fascists achieved their "revolution" by means of a military conspiracy, the date being fixed and the roles assigned. The same was the case with the Spanish officers' coup. Counter-revolutionary coups are al-

most always carried out along these lines. They are usually attempted at a moment when the disappointment of the masses in revolution or democracy has taken the form of indifference, and a favorable political milieu is thus created for an organized and technically prepared coup, the date of which is definitely fixed beforehand. One thing is clear: it is not possible to create a political situation favorable for a reactionary upheaval by any artificial means, much less to fix a certain point of time for it. But when the basic elements of this situation already exist, then the leading party seizes the most favorable moment, as we have seen, adapts its political, organizational, and technical forces, and—if it has not miscalculated—deals the final and victorious blow.

The bourgeoisie has not always made counter-revolutions. In the past it also made revolutions. Did it fix any definite time for these revolutions? It would be interesting, and in many respects instructive, to investigate from this standpoint the development of the classic and of the decadent bourgeois revolutions (a subject for our young Marx-

ist savants!), but even without such a detailed analysis it is possible to establish the following fundamentals of the question. The propertied and educated bourgeoisie, that is, that section of the "people" which gained power, did not make the revolution, but waited until it was made. When the movement among the lower strata brought the cup to overflowing, and the old social order or political regime was overthrown, then power fell almost automatically into the hands of the Liberal bourgeoisie. The Liberal savants designated such a revolution as a "natural," an inevitable revolution. They gathered together a mighty collection of platitudes under the name of historical laws: revolution and counter-revolution (according to M. Karajev of blessed memory—action and reaction) are declared to be natural products of historical evolution and therefore incapable of being arranged according to the calendar, and so forth. These laws have never prevented well prepared counter-revolutionary coups from being carried out. But the nebulousness of the bourgeois-liberal mode of thought sometimes

finds its way into the heads of revolutionists, where it plays havoc and causes much material damage....

Contrast of Bourgeois and Proletarian Methods

But even bourgeois revolutions have not by any means invariably developed at every stage along the lines of the "natural" laws laid down by the Liberal professors; when petty bourgeois-plebeian democracy has overthrown Liberalism, it has done so by means of conspiracy and prepared insurrections, fixed beforehand for definite dates. This was done by the Jacobins—the extreme left wing of the French Revolution. This is perfectly comprehensible. The Liberal bourgeoisie (the French in the year 1789, the Russian in February, 1917) contents itself with waiting for the results of a mighty and elemental movement, in order to throw its wealth, its culture, and its connections with the State apparatus into the scale at the last moment and thus to seize the helm. Petty bourgeois democracy, under similar circumstances, has to proceed differently; it has neither wealth nor social influence and connections at its disposal. It finds itself obliged to replace these by a well thought out and carefully prepared plan of revolutionary overthrow. A plan, however, implies a definite organization in respect of time, and therefore also the fixing of a definite time.

This applies all the more to proletarian revolution. The Communist Party cannot adopt a waiting attitude in face of the growing revolutionary movement of the proletariat. Strictly speaking, this is the attitude taken by Menshevism: to hinder revolution so long as it is in process of development; to utilize its successes as soon as it is in any degree victorious; and to exert every effort to retard it. The Communist Party cannot seize power by utilizing the revolutionary movement while standing aside, but only by means of a direct and immediate political, organizational, and military-technical leadership of the revolutionary masses, both in the period of slow preparation and at the moment of decisive insurrection itself. For this reason the Communist Party has absolutely no use whatever for a Liberal law according to which revolutions happen but are not made, and therefore cannot be fixed for a definite point of time. From the standpoint of the spectator this law is correct; from the standpoint of the leader it is, however, a platitude and a banality.

Let us imagine a country in which the political conditions necessary for proletarian revolution are either already mature, or are obviously and distinctly maturing day by day. What attitude is to be taken under such circumstances by the Communist Party to the question of insurrection and the definite date on which it is to take place?

When the country is passing through an extraordinarily acute social crisis, when the antagonisms are aggravated to the highest degree, when feeling among the working masses is constantly at boiling point, when the party is obviously supported by a certain majority of the working people, and consequently by all the most active, class-conscious, and devoted elements of the proletariat, then the task confronting the party—its only possible task under these circumstances—is to fix a definite time in the im-

mediate future, that is, a time prior to which the favorable revolutionary situation cannot react against us, and then to concentrate every effort on the preparations for the final struggle, to place the whole current policy and organization at the service of the military object in view, that the concentration of forces may justify the striking of the final blow.

The Russian Experience

To consider not merely an abstract country, let us take the Russian October revolution as an example. The country was in the throes of a great crisis, national and international. The State apparatus was paralyzed. The workers streamed in ever-increasing numbers into our party. From the moment when the Bolsheviks were in the majority in the Petrograd Soviet, and afterwards in the Moscow Soviet, the party was faced with the question—not of the struggle for power in general, but of preparing for the seizure of power according to a definite plan and at a definite time. The date fixed was the day upon which the All-Russian Soviet Congress was to take place. One section of the members of the Central Committee was of the opinion that the moment of the insurrection should coincide with the political moment of the Soviet Congress. Other members of the Central Committee feared that the bourgeoisie would have made its preparations by then, and would be able to disperse the congress; these wanted to have the congress held at an earlier date. The decision of the Central Committee fixed the date of the armed insurrection for October 15 at the latest. This decision was carried out with a certain delay of ten days, as the course of agitational and organizational preparations showed that an insurrection independent of the Soviet Congress would have sown misunderstanding among important sections of the working class, as these connected the idea of the seizure of power with the Soviets and not with the party and its secret organizations. On the other hand, it was perfectly clear that the bourgeoisie was already too much demoralized to be able to organize any serious resistance for two or three weeks.

Thus, after the party had gained the majority in the leading Soviets, and had in this way secured the basic political condition for the seizure of power, we were faced by the necessity of fixing a definite calendar date for the decision of the military question. Before we had won the majority, the organizational technical plan was bound to be more or less qualified and elastic. For us the gauge of our revolutionary influence was the Soviets which had been called into existence by the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionists at the beginning of the revolution. The Soviets furnished the cloak for our conspiratorial work; they were also able to serve as governmental organs after the actual seizure of power.

Strategy in Absence of Soviets

Where would our strategy have been if there had been no Soviets? It is obvious that we should have had to turn to other gauges of our revolutionary influence: the trade unions, strikes, street demonstrations, every description of democratic electioneering, etc. Although the Soviets represent the

most accurate gauge of the actual activity of the masses during a revolutionary epoch, still even without the existence of the Soviets we should have been fully able to ascertain the precise moment at which the actual majority of the working class was on our side. Naturally, at this moment we should have had to issue the slogan of the formation of Soviets to the masses. But in doing this we should have already transferred the whole question to the plane of military conflicts; therefore before we issued the slogan on the formation of Soviets, we should have had to have a properly worked out plan for an armed insurrection at a certain fixed time.

If we had then had the majority of the working people on our side, or at least the majority in the decisive centers and districts, the formation of Soviets would have been secured by our appeal. The backward towns and provinces would have followed the leading centres with more or less delay. We should have then had the political task of establishing a Soviet Congress, and of securing for this congress by military measures the possibility of assuming power. It is clear that these are only two aspects of one and the same task.

Let us now imagine that our Central Committee, in the above described situation—that is, there being no Soviets in existence—had met for a decisive session in the period when the masses had already begun to move, but had not yet ensured us a clear and overwhelming majority. How should we then have developed our further plan of action? Should we have fixed a definite point of time for the insurrection?

The reply may be adduced from the above. We should have said to ourselves: At the present moment we have no certain and unqualified majority. But the trend of feeling among the masses is such that the decisive and militant majority necessary for us is merely a matter of the next few weeks. Let us assume that it will take a month to win over the majority of the workers in Petrograd, in Moscow, in the Donetz basin; let us set ourselves this task, and concentrate the necessary forces in these centers. As soon as the majority had been gained—we shall summon the workers to form Soviets. This will require one to two weeks at most for Petrograd, Moscow, and the Donetz basin; it may be calculated with certainty that the remaining towns and provinces will follow the example of the chief centres within the next two or three weeks. Thus, the construction of a network of Soviets will require about a month. After Soviets exist in the important districts, in which we have of course the majority, we shall convene an All-Russian Soviet Congress. We shall require fourteen days to assemble the congress. We have, therefore, two and a half months at our disposal before the congress. In the course of this time the seizure of power must not only be prepared, but actually accomplished.

Time-Table of Operations

We should accordingly have placed before our military organization a programme allowing two months, at most two and a half, for the preparation of the insurrection in Petrograd, in Moscow, on the railways, etc. I am speaking in the conditional tense

(we should have decided, we should have done this and that), for in reality, although our operations were by no means unskillful, still they were by no means so systematic, not because we were in any way disturbed by "historical laws," but because we were carrying out a proletarian insurrection for the first time.

But are not miscalculations likely to occur by such methods? Seizure of power signifies war, and in war there can be victories and defeats. But the systematic method here described is the best and most direct road to the goal, that is, it most enhances the prospects of victory. Thus, for instance, should it have turned out, a month after the Central Committee session of our above adduced example, that we had not yet the majority of the workers on our side, then we

should, of course, not have issued the slogan calling for the formation of Soviets, for in this case the slogan would have miscarried (in our example we assume that the Social Revolutionists and Mensheviks are against the Soviets). And had the reverse been the case, and we had found a decisive and militant majority behind us in the course of fourteen days, this would have abridged our plan and accelerated the decisive moment of insurrection. The same applies to the second and third stages of our plan: the formation of Soviets and the summoning of the Soviet Congress. We should not have issued the slogan of the Soviet Congress, as stated above, until we had secured the actual establishment of Soviets at the most important points. In this manner the realization of every step in our plan is prepared and

secured by the realization of the preceding steps. The work of military preparation proceeds parallel with that of the most definitely dated performance. In this way the party has its military apparatus under complete control. To be sure, a revolution always brings much that is entirely unexpected, unforeseen, elemental; we have, of course, to allow for the occurrence of all these "accidents" and adapt ourselves to them; but we can do this with the greater success and certainty if our conspiracy is thoroughly worked out.

Revolution possesses a mighty power of improvisation, but it never improvises anything good for fatalists, idlers, and fools. Victory demands correct political orientation, organization, and the will to deal the decisive blow.
LEON TROTSKY.

Book Reviews . . .

THE WITHERING AWAY OF THE STATE, by Solomon Bloom. A pamphlet, reprinted from the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Winter, 1946.

In this essay, Professor Bloom, who has acquired something of a reputation as a critic of Marxism, attempts to demonstrate what he considers the varying conceptions on the theory of the state held by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. His thesis is that Engels made greater concessions to the "anarchist conception of the state" than did Marx; and that Marx, on the contrary, really was "closer to the liberal tradition than to formal anarchism." Bloom reaches these conclusions by means of an examination of one of the crucial conceptions in the Marxian system: the "withering away" of the state during the epoch of communism and its replacement by a classless "administration of things."

Bloom begins by describing the traditional version of the Marxian conception. He quotes Marx:

"The abolition of the state has meaning only for Communists, as the necessary result of the abolition of classes with which the necessity of the organized force of one class for the suppression of other classes falls away of itself."

According to the commonly accepted Marxian schema, capitalism is overthrown by the working class, which replaces it by a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat which, in turn, serves as the transition to a classless communist society. Once this classless society is approached, the state—by definition having as its purpose class exploitation and hence by now without function—commences to "wither away."

This idea received its classical formulation in a letter which Engels wrote to August Bebel:

"As soon as there is no longer a class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy of production, the collisions and excesses arising from them have also been removed, there is nothing more to re-

press which would make a special repressive force, a state, necessary."

What this new "administration of things" is, as opposed to a class state, writes Bloom, is "nowhere in Marx or in Engels... discussed directly and comprehensively. We may get some answers, however, from Engels' accounts of the emergence of the state, for he gave at least two accounts. One was that after society had become split into classes their conflicts became so severe that they endangered the existence of society itself. In order to save it by allaying the conflict, a public power became necessary: this power was the first state..."

The other explanation was that the state existed before the division of society into classes. As Engels wrote in *Anti-Dühring*: "The state, which primitive communities had at first developed only for the purpose of safeguarding their common interests... and providing protection against external enemies." (My emphasis—I. H.)

Bloom then proceeds to examine the much more crucial question of Marx's conception of the future "withering away of the state." He quotes from Marx's major work on this subject, *The Critique of the Gotha Program*:

"The question then arises: what changes will the state organization undergo in a communist society? In other words, what social functions still remain there which are analogous to the present functions of the state?"

"Between the capitalist and the communist society lies the period of revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. To this there corresponds also a political transition period, whose state can be nothing else than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

"The (Gotha) Program deals neither with the latter nor with the future state organization of the communist society."

It is on this latter phrase ("the future state organization of the communist society") that Bloom bases most of his contention that Marx believed that even under communism the state would continue to exist. Accordingly, he continues, Marx used

the term "state" in two different ways: "In class society, the state is the tool of the ruling class... in the absence of classes, the state is properly the responsible agent of society."

Bloom's conclusion is that "the weight of the evidence is rather against an anarchist interpretation of the doctrine of Marx" since Marx "insisted on the need of centralization and authority and indeed implied the possibility of a state organization" under communism.

* * *

To this reviewer, Bloom's essay seems an ingenious but unsuccessful attempt to construct, by the method of quotation, the thesis that Marx's theory of the state does not have the ultimate libertarian perspective usually attributed to it.

The aid which such a construction would give to the current anti-Marxian offensive is not difficult to see. A brief refutation involves the following points:

1) The argument from Engels' statements about primitive society seems irrelevant to the question of the future "withering away of the state." Its use involves an unwarranted identification of "primitive communism" with the future communism based on a high productive level. For if a state did exist in a classless "primitive communism," it had as its purpose the mere mutual protection of the tribe against enemy groups and functioned on a social level lower than that of even simple slavery. What relevance such hypothetical "states" in the hypothetical society known as "primitive" communism have to the problem of the existence or non-existence of the state in a highly advanced communist society is not clear to this reviewer.

2) The crux of the question, however, is the by-now famous quotation from the *Gotha Critique*. Bloom is not the first to have offered this quotation as being contradictory to everything else that Marx and Engels wrote. In a footnote, Bloom writes that Lenin too was perplexed for a time by this quotation and that he, Bloom, finds Lenin's analysis of this matter unconvincing. Bloom does not, unfortunately, offer any reasons

for finding Lenin's analysis of this matter unconvincing, but this reviewer believes that Lenin's remarks on the matter are, when considered within the framework of the entire Marxian system, thoroughly satisfactory. Lenin attempts to make clear what Marx meant when writing about the "future state organization of communist society" by quoting from a further section of *The Critique* in which Marx distinguished between two stages of communist society (which Lenin was subsequently to characterize as socialism and communism.) In the first stage, writes Marx:

"What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus, in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges... these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society." And Marx continues: "In a higher phase of communist society... the narrow horizon of bourgeois right (can) be fully left behind and society (can) inscribe on its banners: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."

Since, says Lenin in his fascinating notebook on *The Critique*, "semi-bourgeois rights would still exist" in the first stage of communism, so too "the semi-bourgeois state" has still not fully disappeared. And in *State and Revolution*, Lenin repeats the same idea in slightly different language: "Consequently, not only bourgeois right but even the bourgeois state for a certain time remains under communism, without the bourgeoisie." In other words, Marx's reference to the "future state organization of the communist society" upon which Bloom rests his entire case is merely a reference to the process of the "withering away" of the state which begins, according to the Marxian conception, approximately when the dictatorship of the proletariat slides into the "first phase of communism."

3) Now all this may seem rather casuistic and Talmudic. But it is necessary to refute attempts, such as those of Bloom, to give Marx an authoritarian emphasis which does not really apply. Once that is done, we can proceed to the interesting question: just what would the actual development of this "withering away of the state" entail? Did Lenin foresee a situation in which the state had already withered away by the time the dictatorship of the proletariat slides into socialism (or, as he calls it, "the first phase of communism") or a situation in which the "withering away of the state" begins with socialism? In the latter case, Marx's phrase about "the state organization" of communist society is perfectly comprehensible.

The basic trouble with an approach such as that of Bloom is that it views the whole matter most mechanically, as if it were a mere question of constructing conceptualized categories which had Chinese walls between them. I doubt very much if the future workers' state will proclaim, say, on January 1, that "as of today" it is no longer a workers' state but rather the "first

phase of communist society." The categories of distinction set up by Marx and developed by Lenin are categories whose purposes are largely useful in terms of goals and processes of development toward which to strive; and aids to future historians who will be able to check back on the actual development of a free society to compare it with the Marxian forecast.

Bloom's attempt to blow up an entire theoretical structure by pitting quotation against quotation may earn him a pat on the head in the artery-hardened circles of American bourgeois sociology, but cannot be taken very seriously by Marxists.

IRVING HOWE.

BEATRICE WEBB, by Margaret Cole. Harcourt Brace. \$3.00.

The life of Beatrice Webb had two facets which contained something of the remarkable. The first was her curious devotion to gathering facts for reformist Socialists; the second, her even more curious apologies for the Stalinist régime in Russia. Some slight study of her intellectual and emotional development, however, soon reveals that these two facets of her personality are less curious than appears on the surface and that they are certainly not remarkable.

Beatrice was the daughter of a wealthy Victorian upper class family; under the stimulation of her father's liberal intellectualism she turned to social studies as an outlet for her much needed self-expression. She first devoted herself to the cooperative movement, then to conditions among the workers as interesting fields for study and finally, in February, 1890, read *Fabian Essays in Socialism* and became a Fabian, one of the most provincial, useless, boring and bombastic kind of reformist Socialist.

It was at about the same time that she met Sidney Webb, a pedantic civil servant who knew a million facts about a limited number of subjects and who, with George Bernard Shaw, Olivier and Wallas, formed the real leadership of the Fabian Society. The meeting of Beatrice and Sidney was a meeting of minds more devoted to research into the number of toilet seats per slum dwelling in the East End of London, or the "incidence of sickness during pregnancy" and related subjects, than anything else under the sun. That this relationship should have developed into marriage and a life-long partnership of devotion to the gathering of many hundreds of thousands of such statistics is due to a certain philosophy held in common by the two.

Beatrice and Sidney Webb believed that if they could accumulate a mountain of information high enough to be seen by the entire world, relating to the evils of existence under British capitalism, even the bourgeoisie would be forced to retreat from its adamant defense of all capitalist institutions. The Webbs believed in the milk-and-water doctrine of achieving Socialism by education and they led a milk-and-water existence propagating this doctrine. It must be admitted, of course, that they knew the value of facts and figures and that this pre-

vented them from being as utterly loose in their political thinking as some of the other figures in the Fabian movement.

With their approach to socialism, the Webbs fitted into the newly formed British Labor Party in 1918 like slender hands into the most tight-fitting of gloves. They played a very large part in drafting its constitution and framing its political program. There were innumerable jobs for them to do in the editorial and research departments of the Labor Party apparatus.

Margaret Cole's biography of Beatrice Webb is enlightening because the life of the Webbs explains so clearly the weaknesses of the British Labor Party, not in terms of its politics, of course, but in terms of the people who hold its political point of view. Is it any wonder that a party which was founded with the assistance of an ex-clerk from the British Colonial Office who believed that one could eliminate the evils of capitalism simply by educating people to the statistics of working class poverty—is it any wonder that such a party should allow itself to become the instrument of British imperialism in China, in India and in Palestine? Sidney Webb transferred the psychology of the Colonial Office into his marital partnership and then into the offices of the British Labor Party. He was a Fabian throughout and consistent with the ideas of reformist socialism throughout.

And when Ramsay Macdonald proved to all the world that a coalition of Labor bureaucrats with the bourgeoisie merely played into the hands of the latter class, is it any wonder that the Webbs were able to swing toward the Stalin bureaucracy as a solution for the world's ills? There was no longer any revolutionary substance in the men who composed the upper circles of the Kremlin. They no longer desired workers' power in England any more than the Webbs did. When the latter visited Russia they found themselves in complete harmony with this society despotically governed by a hierarchy of privileged clerks and statisticians which we have now come to call bureaucratic collectivism. To Sidney it appeared less efficient, no doubt, but essentially of a piece with the atmosphere of the British Colonial Office or the Research Office of the British Labor Party and the Webbs felt at home in it.

Mararet Cole's biography is worth reading; it conveys with a fair amount of faithfulness the nature of the Webb partnership. The thing it suffers from politically is the author's inability to evaluate, from a Marxist point of view, the ideas of the Webbs on socialism.

A. VICTOR.

A Marxist Reply to Macdonald

Irving Howe, known to our readers for his contributions to THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, has written a reply to Dwight Macdonald's programmatic statement, *The Root Is Man*, which will appear in the October issue of *Politics*. This is the first reply from the point of view of the Workers Party.

A Note on Stiler's "The Politics of Psychoanalysis"

The article on "The Politics of Psychoanalysis," by Robert Stiler, which appeared in our August issue, has aroused considerable interest. We are in receipt of a number of critical replies from readers. They will appear in our November issue with replies by Stiler.

We take this occasion to offer an explanation to our readers and an apology to Stiler for inadvertently creating some confusion about the views expressed in the article. Most of the critics of Stiler have commented on his failure to deal with Fromm, Horney and other current schools of psychoanalytic thought. This

failure was due to the fact that the article was originally written to appear as the first in a series of four. The second was to be devoted to Horney-Fromm, the third to Reich and the last to a summary argument. Due to space limitations, THE NEW INTERNATIONAL agreed to the publication of the first article only. However, our failure to inform our readers of the circumstances under which it was being published led to considerable misunderstanding. Stiler's reply to the critics of his article will afford him an opportunity to make further clarification of this aspect of the controversy.—Editors.

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